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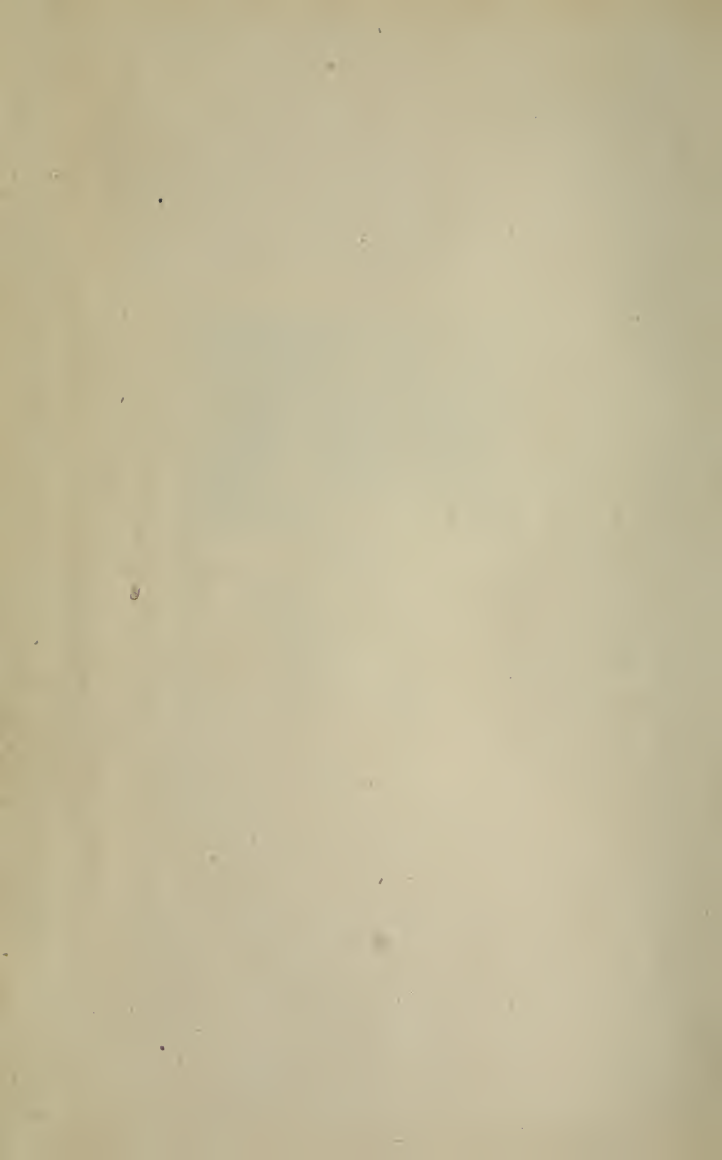
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JABEZ OLIPHANT;

OR,

THE MODERN PRINCE.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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JABEZ OLIPHANT.

BOOK I.

MR. OLIPHANT ASCENDS THE THRONE.

CHAPTER I.

MR. OLIPHANT'S LAST DAY IN TOWN.

“IT is two minutes to seven, Mr. Graham ;
will you order the young men to close
the premises ?”

Mr. Oliphant had said this in exactly the
same way and at exactly the same moment
every night for thirty years, and to say it

he stopped as usual in the middle of his stately promenade round the extensive premises of the firm, Jabez Oliphant and Co., Teadealers, Wholesale and Retail, in Cheap-side.

He was a tall and well-built man, though somewhat spare, and the dark blue surtout, which was always fastened tight over his chest and had a flower in the button-hole, set off his handsome figure very well. His hair was getting grey, but he was still remarkably erect, and as he spoke his head fell back a little out of the perpendicular, giving him a slight air of haughtiness; a failing that might also be traced in the quiet but decisive tone in which he issued his order. Very grand and unapproachable must Jabez Oliphant have appeared to the poor passer-by, but after all it was the calm and polished hauteur of a gentleman, and not, as might rather have been expected, the coarse arro-

gance of the successful trader. In fact, after being five and forty years in the shop and making the fortune of a million by it, he seemed a little out of place in it still. At the first guess a humourist would probably have set him down as some stately Norman aristocrat who had walked out of his frame and was condescending, for the fun of the thing, to try his hand at commerce.

One of the shopmen now stepped timidly up to him, "If you please, sir," he said, "to-morrow is Saturday, and we thought—that is, we hoped—we might perhaps have a half-holiday on such an occasion."

"I should have been glad to grant it," Mr. Oliphant answered, in the same courteous measured accents, but with an unusual touch of kindness in them; "but you know how contrary such a thing would be to all the rules of the house. There is seven;" and he turned to the cashier.

“ Mr. Smithies, we will balance the day’s accounts, if you please ;—oh, and Mr. Nichols !”

Another of the young men came forward, apparently, as officers going to their first battle are said to do sometimes, disguising his nervousness under a gallant show of briskness.

“ It is your fault, I understand, that those six chests were not forwarded to Leadbeater and Co. ; you will explain the omission to me at eleven to-morrow.” Mr. Oliphant checked himself suddenly, however, and added in a softer tone, “ Ah, well, never mind ; I forgot that I shall not be here to-morrow.”

The cash was now balanced, and pronounced “ only a halfpenny wrong.”

“ Only a halfpenny, sir !” exclaimed Mr. Oliphant ; “ it is either right or wrong, I suppose.” Then he muttered to himself : “ I never can get poor Smithies to see that

the halfpence are the life and soul of business : bad, very bad ; to say nothing of the principle of the thing."

Twenty minutes' labour among the books and papers followed, with not a few blank looks from the young men who were thus kept in beyond the hour at which it was considered the fashion among the gentlemen of the establishment to pay their respects to the far-famed performers at the Drink-and-welcome Music Hall. But at length the mistake in the accounts was set right, and Mr. Oliphant took up his hat.

"Good night, gentlemen," he said, "and, Mr. Smithies, here is a trifle for the young men to drink my health with ; be good enough to apportion it equally amongst them." Accordingly he handed the cashier a cheque, and went out with a courteous inclination by way of general adieu, for he was retiring from the firm, and this was his last night at the shop.

“Crusty old curmudgeon!” exclaimed Nichols when the door was safely closed. “What a wiggling I should have got to-morrow, if he had been coming here again.”

“Well, but,” said Smithies, looking at the cheque, “he has cut up generously at last, and no mistake: here’s a cool fiver for every mother’s son of us; and I’ll be hanged if the old muff hasn’t added six and elevenpence for the receipt stamps—a penny apiece—that we may have the note clear. Isn’t that Gentleman Jabez to nothing? It’s exact to a penny, I’ve no doubt.”

“No doubt, no doubt,” echoed the eldest of the shopmen, wiping first his spectacles, and then his eyes, with a demonstration, however, that certainly appeared a little out of proportion to the moisture he found there. “Ay, John, he was a good master; a better class never entered this establishment, and I always said so. Very punctual,

very exact, but if he thought a thing was right, he did it."

"Wish he'd have done it in a kinder way, then," returned a melancholy-looking youth in Byronic collars, who was called Jenkins, and was amusing himself, as he leaned against the counter, by tossing up a shilling and catching it with one hand. "Only to think of the surly old bear refusing us a holiday and then coming out so strong with his money! Gad, from the airs he gives himself, we might be niggers—nothing more, sir" (the "sir" in question, it is proper to explain, was only a figure of rhetoric—an imaginary Speaker, in an imaginary chair—conjured up by the lively fancy of Mr. Jenkins), "nothing more—not men with souls, and—and intellects expanding themselves, sir, in the glorious atmosphere of this metropolis of the world and of liberty. Sir, is it to be borne that Englishmen, free Englishmen——"

“Come, come, cut it short, Jim,” interrupted one of his friends good-humouredly; “wait till you are member for the tea-gardens, old fellow, and then we’ll come and hear you, as we’ve often promised. We shall miss jolly old Tom in ‘Villikins,’ if you don’t look alive.”

The injured look of the orator, whose eloquence was thus nipped in the bud, seemed to hint that his speech might not possibly have proved as great a treat to his friends as “Villikins;” but, as he was evidently alone in the opinion, while most kinds of oratory are eminently unsatisfactory unless you have an audience, the young man of the collars contented himself with putting on a gloomy “Resurgam” air and following his companions.

While they were thus discussing their employer with a pleasant freedom that made amends for previous restraint, Jabez Oliphant was threading his way homewards.

through the crowded streets. He was absorbed in thought, and held his head very stiffly, though he nodded in a dignified way to an acquaintance here and there, and stopped occasionally to exchange a word or two with some of the City notabilities. Any one, however, who knew him well would have observed that his step was a little more jaunty and exulting than usual. Most men at sixty are thinking of their graves, but Mr. Oliphant was just about to begin life.

He was born in one of the rough Yorkshire dales, and had risen by his own industry and talents alone; his father being the village cobbler, a poor and illiterate man, whose own ambition had been so effectually cured by that admirable counter-irritant, a large family, that he never once thought Jabez, his eldest boy, could do anything but vegetate in the old place at the old trade. But it was not so to be. One of

the boy's playfellows had a brother, a clerk in some Manchester house, who seeing the lad was fond of reading lent him a book about eminent business men. It was a poor thing, wretched in style, meagre in facts, but it was enough for Jabez. He devoured it at one gulp, and, when he rose from it, though he was only ten years old, his mind was made up. He would not be a cobbler, not he; he would be a great merchant like those he read of, and he would go to school; for all of them had begun with that.

Now, two or three miles from his native village of Reinsber, was the free grammar school of Stainton, at which from time immemorial rich and poor had learned their tasks together; and nothing would serve Jabez but going there. By dint of repeated entreaties he at length obtained his father's consent to try the school for a single year, a time which seemed quite sufficient and

almost immeasurable to the boy, and to the old man—as age and youth look at this and most things through different ends of the telescope—a short period which would be well spent in curing him of his folly.

The kind old bookseller at Stainton lent the boy a Latin grammar and gave him some help in the language, so that at Midsummer he entered the school with credit. From that time, as the saying goes, he never looked behind him. The year came and went, but the boy brought home so many prizes, and the masters gave such reports of him, that by the end of it the cobbler had grown proud of his son. “Jabez was happen reght efter aw,” he said; “he has good stuff in him,” a remark which had the merit of containing a little graceful compliment to himself as well as his son. So by endless saving and scraping, hard work and poor fare on the part of all, and by the boy’s labouring in the shop after he

came home, sometimes till one or two in the morning, he was kept at school till he was fifteen and a "scholar."

The old man lived long enough to have his kindness rewarded. Throughout life it was a marked characteristic of Jabez Oliphant that sooner or later he invariably accomplished whatever he had once made up his mind to do ; and as he had quite made up his mind to be a great business man, he succeeded. But it is beyond our province to describe his rise, or to tell how, after reaching London with the usual lucky sixpence in his pocket, he obtained through the Manchester clerk a place as errand-boy at a tea-dealer's in Cheapside ; how, a footing once gained, by sticking to the place and seizing opportunities, from errand-boy he became shopman, from shopman cashier, from cashier foreman, and how then, on a vacancy occurring in the firm, his masters found him so necessary that they gave him

the partnership ; how afterwards, by hard-headed industry and strong will, each year he had raised the fortunes of the house ; or again, how, when he became the chief partner, he had cautiously added a dingy little office, a couple of yards square, to the great shop ; and how the former, so inferior in appearance, had surpassed the latter infinitely in money-getting and in power, and now had blocks of warehouses on the Thames, and a score of vessels on the sea, and agents in every part of the habitable world : how thus Jabez Oliphant, Esq., had risen to be one of the greatest of the great merchant princes of England, a millionaire whose word was gold in the city, and his bow an honour in Belgravia ; and how, amid it all, he had not forgotten one of those who befriended him when poor, but had lavished on his proud old parents every comfort that affection or money could bestow, had made the struggling Manches-

ter clerk his book-keeper, and had returned the Stainton bookseller's loan with interest that astonished the lender.

Altogether it was a great and complete story, not without a certain dignity of its own; and in the dearth of English epics I am sorry that I must leave so grand and national a subject unattempted. Yet I cannot but think there would be some monotony in the tale. It must have been monotonous, that pacing backwards and forwards, day after day and year after year for five-and-forty years, whether it was in the dingy little office with the single desk and the one sunbeam that hardly effected an entrance for half an hour a day and seemed heartily ashamed of itself when it had got in, or in the big shop only a thought less dingy in spite of the gilded tea-chests and all the smirks of the spruce shopmen. In an age of sensation novels, one can imagine something livelier than the working of ad-

dition and subtraction sums for half a century on a stretch, or calculating a million times in succession the discount at 5 per cent. on a bill from Shanghai of 823*l.* 7*s.* 3*d.* due in 8 months, or the perpetual counting of bank-notes, even if they are one's own. Monotonous work or not, however, Mr. Oliphant had hardened under it, and, to all outward appearance, had become a proud, solitary, just old man, without a bit of heart or poetry about him.

Had he then (asks some young lady reader), had he never known that soothing and softening influence which makes poets and women of us all? that sweet little bird of Love, which at least once in the lives of most of us—of Corydon at the counter equally with Tityrus under the beech-tree—persists in making its nest in our hearts and in singing us humanising songs, to another, and a good deal better tune, than the clink of guineas? Perhaps he had, but

if so, the affair had come to nothing and he never referred to it in any way. If Jabez Oliphant ever thawed at all when in love, which his friends doubted, he was one of those men who freeze all the harder for their disappointment.

Yet under all the coldness and prose of this man of figures, it is strange to say that, unknown to his dearest friends, unsuspected even by the sister-in-law and niece with whom he lived, there had been all along a vein of poetry at red heat. He had carried away with him from Yorkshire a deep instinctive attachment to his native village, and this attachment had survived, the anxieties of business during so many years, and had even outlived that other love of his. From the moment he set foot in town, it had been the dream of his life, if ever he became rich, to go back and live at Reinsber. And the dream had grown in dimensions with brooding on it. It had

long since become a fixed idea with him not only to live there, but to make the little place a model for all villages, and to be himself its king ; for, accustomed as he was by his wealth, munificence, and abilities, to shine as a star of the first magnitude even among the stars of London, at Reinsber he would be a sun without rival stars at all. So he had bought many estates in the neighbourhood, and finally the old Hall itself, which had been for generations in the hands of an ancient family, the Mansfields, who had gone down in the world as Mr. Oliphant had gone up.

Jabez, as one of his shopmen remarked, was a man of great exactitude. He had always determined to withdraw from the firm at sixty, and on his sixtieth birthday he bade the old premises the farewell I have described, and having already created himself sovereign of Reinsber, was

on his way to take possession of his new kingdom.

Might not his step well be a little jaunty ?

CHAPTER II.

MR. OLIPHANT'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO REINSBER.

I DO not think you would easily find in a long day's journey, even in this age of railways, as beautiful or primitive a village as Reinsber. It lies, as we said, in one of the wildest and most picturesque of the Yorkshire dales, forty miles away from any large city, and out of sight and sound of the world. The nearest town is Stainton, three or four miles lower down the valley, and Stainton itself, though greatly looked up to by an extensive district surrounding it, called Craven—Craig-ven, the Land of

Craggs—is but a village on a rather larger scale. Still, on the strength of its proud pre-eminence as the market-town of the neighbourhood, and partly, perhaps, like a backwoods city, from its unlimited capacity for extension, Stainton is disposed to be somewhat pretentious.

Through the eighty or hundred white-washed cottages which are dignified by the name of Reinsber, there winds a little mountain-stream, down to which slope the flowery gardens and green crofts of the scattered cottages above; but of the houses themselves, from this point of view, you can only catch a peep now and then, so thick is the veil of over-hanging sycamores, ashes, and hazels. The pretty brook itself has no notion, like some misguided streams, of either giving up its clearness or holding its tongue in the presence of man, and it trots along with pure waters and delicious murmurs all day, but with a great deal of

unnecessary splutter and foam, as if in a hurry to join the wider river just below: for Reinsber stands nearly at the junction of its own little valley with the broader dale of the Ribble, and from some parts of the village you may look up the narrowing dale for miles, and may see the river winding between steep hills topped with heather, and above them mountains of some name, such as Penyghent and Ingleborough, which rise at the head of the valley with forms of considerable grandeur. This is looking northward, but to the south also the view is extremely beautiful. There for foreground on each side are long lines of grey limestone cliffs, plumed with dwarf yew and climbing ivy, and worn by age into a thousand fantastic towers and buttresses, while the slope from the cliffs to the Ribble is occupied by a rich growth of native wood. Near the river, and parallel to it, the white road to the village winds through the trees, and as

the eye wanders on, you see the valley gradually widening, and at last ending in a great expanse of plain, well-wooded, rich and beautiful. Then the long whale-backed mountain of Pendle, in another county, rises abruptly and stops our view in the blue distance; not but that the prospect has been an extensive one already, for Pendle, as the crow flies, is twenty or five and twenty miles from Reinsber.

The country around is purely pastoral. The plough is unknown; for the Yorkshire dalesmen say "their land is best the green side uppermost." On each side of the river is a strip of the richest meadow-ground, succeeded, as you ascend the hill-side, by green pastures; but when you have climbed half a mile above the village, you are on a vast upland wilderness of rocks, bent, and heather, with the wail of the plover and the whistle of the curlew always round you; a

wilderness over which you might stroll in most directions for thirty or forty miles without a break except from valleys still more primitive, and which possesses a sufficient store of huge precipices, caves and waterfalls to furnish many a romantic tale at the shepherd's fireside.

Such was the quiet little principality of which Mr. Oliphant, in the spring of 186—, a week or two after the incidents mentioned in the last chapter, was on his way to take possession. Accompanied by his niece he was travelling in an open carriage, drawn by a pair of post horses. During most of their journey he had been very silent, leaning back in the carriage in his stately fashion ; but it was pleasant to see the flush of excitement that gradually stole over his face, as they neared their destination and came in sight of objects he remembered. In truth, it was one of those moments which are worth a life-time, but

which very few have the luck to experience. It would have been sufficiently gratifying for an old man to feel that, after all those weary years of London smoke and counting-house, he was returning at last, under any circumstances, to the spot he liked best; but it was inexpressibly more delightful to be coming back, his toils rewarded and his dreams realised, with riches and honour, to the home he left so poor. No wonder, therefore, there was a softness about Mr. Oliphant's heart which he had not known for years.

It was a beautiful afternoon in May. The woods were bursting into leaf all around them, the primroses and hyacinths were in full blaze in the bright sunlight on the banks, and the throstles and larks were contending with each other in their songs. In all limestone districts, there is a sparkle in the streams, a vivid green in the pastures, and a general cheerfulness in the

landscape—a sunniness, if I may use the word—arising, no doubt, from the light colour of the prevailing rock, but which one may look for in vain elsewhere. It was so here ; more especially was it so on this bright afternoon, and this circumstance, perhaps, had also an influence on the old man's mind. From whatever cause, however, his forty years of pride seemed to have thawed suddenly, and, at last, as the carriage reached the top of a little eminence, two or three miles from Reinsber, his feelings culminated in a sort of boyish delight.

“ There, there ! ” he cried, throwing his body forward ; “ see, Kate, there are Reinsber Scars : are they not beautiful ? ”

Kate turned to look, flushing with pleasure, not so much at the beauty of the scene before them, as at the tone of eagerness and geniality which was so strange in her uncle. But I positively forgot that we

have been toiling up Stainton Brow all this time, and I have not yet introduced you to Miss Oliphant. Come, then, let us lose no time about it, for I like her so much myself, that I shall be extremely disappointed if you do not like her also.

Kate's was one of those rare natures which under considerable playfulness conceal a good heart and a strong will. If you had seen her racing with Fido in the grounds, or heard her teasing her friends good-humouredly, both of which were favourite amusements of hers, you might have thought her only one of the ordinary light-hearted butterflies, that are fit enough for the sunshine, and look pretty in it, but for the cold winds of life—pshaw! But then she occasionally flashed into enthusiasm, though she would laugh it off a moment afterwards, with a pretty little blush, as if ashamed to be detected in earnest. That puzzled you; it had puzzled most of

her acquaintance. But when you came to know her intimately, you found, and perhaps to your cost, if she did not happen to agree with you, that Miss Oliphant could be very much in earnest, indeed, in some things. There were plenty of flowers at the surface, but, only an inch or two below, try where you might, you struck rock.

She was nineteen, rather above the middle height, and very graceful both in her figure and movements. Nor in Kate's most spirited sallies could even a prude have detected the least approach to "fastness;" her voice was always too sweet and gentle—her thoughts, her words, her whole manner, were too exquisitely feminine, for that: and probably the persons whom Miss Oliphant disliked most were precisely those girls who are not unaptly called "a bad imitation of their younger brothers." Her face was a noble specimen of the blonde type of beauty. It was her mother's face

(not the present Mrs. Oliphant, who was only Kate's stepmother), but her liveliness was inherited from her father—all the legacy, by the way, she ever had from him ; for poor John Oliphant, with his easy careless good-nature, had been as plainly created for spending money as his brother Jabez for making it, and long before he died had discovered the intentions of Providence in that respect. Jabez had paid his debts again and again, had kept him, had buried him, and after his death had taken charge of his widow and of Kate.

“ Beautiful indeed ! ” answered Kate softly at last, with deep feeling. Then she added, with an arch laugh, “ but I think the foreground is prettier still.”

“ What, the wood ? Ay, I have never seen any green to match yon. We shall find some fine bits for an artist's pencil yonder, eh, Kate ? ” His niece was a skilful amateur.

“No, not the wood, dear uncle, but your face. I have never seen it half so bright in my life ;” and she kissed the old man twice. He returned the salute fondly but gravely, for demonstrations of this kind were somewhat foreign to the natures both of uncle and niece, and were very rare with them.

During the rest of their journey, the old man kept eagerly pointing out to her the places he recollected. “Yon dark spot is Skinscape Hole—so we boys used to call it: it goes into the rocks for a mile; in fact, we used quietly to believe amongst ourselves that there was no end at all to some of the branching passages. Ah, the times I have explored it! Ay, and do you see that overhanging rock, with a little tuft of ivy below it? there was always a hawk’s nest in that tuft, but no one had ever reached it except Tom Chitty. I remember I tried to rob it five years in suc-

cession, and failed ; but I did it the sixth."

"You talk as if you were going to try again to-morrow," said Kate, laughing ; "we shall have to hire a staff of keepers, I can see ; you are ready for any desperate enterprise."

"I have often wondered where Tom is: the last time I heard of him he was in Australia. There is the pool where we used to bathe : the water is shallow to some distance from the side, but then it deepens all at once, and young Silverwood got in there and was drowned. I never shall forget the scene. Of all my school-fellows he was the one I liked best—poor Dick !"

Thus praising past time while they enjoyed the present, our travellers came in sight of the village, and Miss Oliphant was delighted with the view of her future home. But the sight, so uncommon about Reinsber,

of a few country-people strolling towards it in twos and threes, with all the abandon of determined pleasure-seekers, seemed now to occupy the old man's thoughts, and to fill him first with surprise and then with a kind of simmering satisfaction. He relapsed indeed into silence, but he looked very like a dignified Newfoundland that is being stroked the right way by a child.

"Really, this is more than I expected—much more," he said, as they came in sight of an arch of evergreens hung between the first two houses in the village, and with the word "Welcome," in huge letters, in the middle. "And I thought we had kept the day of our arrival so close! All their own notion, Kate; I am rather averse to this pomp and fuss, myself," he added, carelessly.

"I am sure they are very kind; it must have been a great deal of trouble," said Kate, looking at the arch.

They now heard a distant cheer, far up the straggling village. "They are aware, you hear, that we have entered the place. This honour, you must know, Kate, is a most unusual one at Reinsber: I never knew a single instance before. However, no doubt they are naturally proud of a fellow-townsmen who has distinguished himself."

"But, uncle, how could the news of our arrival reach them up yonder so soon?" asked Kate. "Have they the telegraph at Reinsber?"

"Oh, they had scouts on the look-out, I suppose."

As they drove quietly through the long street, the number of persons in holiday garb who were advancing in the same direction kept increasing, but presently they met a stream of rustics pouring down from a side street which led up to the village green. The crowd consisted mainly of a

noisy, jovial medley of ruddy-faced lads and blooming country graces, not in threes but in dozens, and almost all of them with large bunches of primroses or other spring-flowers in their hands; but here and there in the mass were demure, chapel-going shopkeepers, fat matrons with prodigious baby-burdens, and stalwart, rollicking tenant-farmers or labourers—the two classes being quite undistinguishable here in speech, manners, or even in dress, for both had waistcoats and neckties of such astonishingly vivid colours that they seemed to belong to some brighter planet than ours. In the centre of all was Tommy Doolittle, the principal grocer and sole constable of Reinsber, a pale, little, bald-headed man, who was staggering along under the weight both of his own importance on the occasion, and, still more, of an immense red banner which he carried, with ‘Industry and Temperance lead to Wealth

and Joy' painted on it in white letters. Tommy being a strenuous 'teetotaler,' the flag had already done good service at many feasts of our more temperate brethren, and had even graced one or two elections for the Riding. In fact, by careful observation, you might still have traced the words 'Vote for ——,' under a huge square patch on the red calico. This, however, Tommy very properly thought, was no valid reason for not showing its splendours again.

"See, Kate; a most appropriate motto, is it not? Really, there must be at least four or five hundred people present—a very great gathering for Reinsber, I assure you. Do you not think it would be proper to make them a little speech?"

"Nay, you know their customs much better than I do, uncle; but might it not be as well to wait till some one—perhaps the clergyman of the place—addresses us,

as he ought to do, ought he not? How they do all stare at us, to be sure, and how surprised they seem! It is very odd."

"They are anxious, no doubt, to see what we are like. We have been the sole talk of Reinsber for weeks, I fancy."

Whilst the carriage made its way through the crowd, Mr. Oliphant began bowing graciously on each side, at which the rustics stared harder than ever. "They mean well," he remarked; "but their manners are bad, very. After taking the trouble to organise all this procession specially for us, they do not know how to look when we come. But they are capable of better things, I believe, under good management."

A strapping young farmer now caught sight of a rustic flame of his on the other side of the carriage, and being in a sportive mood from frequent libations, thought it would be a feat to throw a nosegay of

primroses across the horses to her. His shot, as may be supposed under the circumstances, was rather well intended than well directed, and the flowers fell in a mass on Kate's lap, while she was looking another way. Jabez, however, thinking it an intentional compliment to his niece, was delighted, and very warmly thanked the fellow, who stood staring in surprise and consternation at what he had done ; but a half-crown popped into his fingers reconciled him to the act, and, his face beaming with joy, he began a tipsy 'hurrah !' which was taken up by the crowd. They had seen the money pass from one hand to the other, and, touched by the electrical influence which the sight of coin usually has on a mob, each man, woman, and child began flinging showers of primroses, violets, or hyacinths, into the carriage, till it seemed a moving hillock of blue and yellow, and Kate was in some danger of being buried,

like the unlucky Roman maiden, under the presents she received.

Jabez was equal to the emergency. He pulled out all the silver and copper in his pockets, and flung handfuls first on the one side, and then on the other, bowing all the time like Punch in the puppet-show, while the mob cheered and cheered again after each handful. Never was there such an ovation. Even Kate was too much delighted not to smile and bow now. At last Mr. Oliphant's feelings overcame him, and stopping the carriage, he delivered himself of the following speech :

“I am at a loss how to thank you sufficiently, my good people, for this splendid reception. Knowing how averse you are to ceremony for the most part, I think you have been really too kind to me. You seem glad to have me once more among you, and I can truly say that I too am glad to come back. I always liked Reinsber,

and I always vowed in my heart that I would return and end my days among you. I am here to fulfil my vow and live with you, and I trust we shall soon be friends. I know not what more I can say, except that I thank you once more for your great kindness, and that your comfort and improvement shall be my constant care."

The oration was grandly delivered, as suited the occasion, but the sense was lost on the mass of the good villagers, for they cheered all but incessantly, and always in the wrong place. Tommy Doolittle, however, who, with half-a-dozen others, was sufficiently near to catch a few of Mr. Oliphant's words, seemed to prick up his ears and spread his little eyes; but at the end of the speech he made Jabez a very low obeisance indeed.

The carriage then passed on, gradually emerging from the crowd. At the farther end of the village was a still more elaborate

arch of flowers, with 'Hail to the Queen of May' upon it. "Look, Kate, look," whispered Mr. Oliphant; "a special compliment to yourself. Very appropriate and pretty indeed! Dear me, what trouble they have given themselves for us! I should have liked to thank them particularly for this. Indeed, I almost think we ought to turn again and do so; besides, I find there are several other things I wish to say to them." But Kate, who was tired, dissuaded her uncle from returning, and they rattled on to the Hall at an increased pace.

A circumstance must now be mentioned which I would gladly omit. Scarcely was the carriage gone and the cheering over when a farmer close to Doolittle remarked:

"I say, Tommy, but this bangs me. Wha the deuce is he, and what did he mean by thanking us sa mich?"

"I really don't know," replied Tommy, timidly ; "I—I think it must have been the banner," and he cast another admiring glance up at the mistress of his thoughts.

"Dal thy flag," said the other ; "it runs atween thee and thy wits, thou dunder-head. Does ta knaw yon fellow, Dick?"

"Nay ; but he hes a couple o' tidy tits onyhow," answered Dick Wideawake, the Yorkshireman addressed, and the sharpest hand in the dale at a bargain.

"Well, he's ter'ble free wi' his money an' his gab, be he wha he may," said another ; "but here comes t' queen." And there swept down the side street another crowd, bearing upon a chair supported by the shoulders of four young men a pretty country lass who had just been made the "Queen of the May," and was being carried round the village in procession, before the dance on the green at night.

The fact is, that Mr. Oliphant in his

long absence from Reinsber had forgotten that the village was one of the few now left which keep up May-day (when he happened to arrive) by choosing a queen and celebrating her short reign with rustic honours. I know not, however, whether to admire most in my hero that sublime consciousness of desert which accompanies great minds, and which instinctively recognised in these honours a natural joy on the part of the innocent villagers at his return; or the unconscious tact he displayed in converting, by a few coppers and sixpences, what was meant as a fanciful tribute to another into a real ovation for himself. From this little episode, too, I infer that Jabez Oliphant possessed another of the requisites for a great ruler. He was evidently fortunate as well as wise. Providence was on his side, and being determined to give him a triumphal entry whether the neglectful boors wished it or

not, kept the May Queen well behind the scenes and out of sight till he had delivered his speech and was safely through the village.

CHAPTER III.

FOTHERGILL AND TRUMAN.

SCARCELY half-an-hour had elapsed after the Oliphants reached the house when they were summoned from their dressing-rooms to receive a couple of visitors. Though the mob had been altogether ignorant who our travellers were, two or three of the crowd, with the enterprising curiosity natural to small places, had made it their business to see where the carriage went, and, when it turned from the main road, had suddenly guessed that the old gentleman was the new owner of Reinsber Hall. The news soon spread and reached the ears of one of Mr. Oliphant's

acquaintances who happened to be among the crowd, and, indeed, was the principal manager of the festivities.

William Fothergill was a dark-complexioned man with large and roughly-chiselled but not ungainly features, that indicated considerable mental power. He had practised for a short time as a physician in London; but, on inheriting a small estate near Reinsber, and finding that the receipts from his profession were unlikely for some years to pay for the cleaning of the brass plate on his door, he had abandoned the science of health for that of destruction, and, a year or two before our story begins, had become a confirmed grouse-killer and country gentleman. He was a bachelor, and, knowing the Oliphants in town from the accident of their connection with Reinsber, thought it only proper to pay his respects to them at once, more especially since Kate's beauty, if

report spoke the truth, had already made some impression on him. He took the clergyman of the place with him.

Mr. Oliphant by this time had got over his emotion, and received his visitors with his usual condescension.

“I heard of your arrival, Mr. Oliphant,” said Fothergill, when they had shaken hands, “and I thought I would just run in for a minute to welcome you to the place. We are all very glad you are come, but you’ll find Reinsber as dull as the morning after a ball, Miss Oliphant. I have taken the liberty of bringing my friend, Mr. Truman, with me—our incumbent.”

The Rev. Joseph Truman was a tall, big-boned, awkward man, with a kind, unassuming expression of countenance. He had been incumbent of Reinsber for some three-and-twenty years (he was now on the shady side of fifty), and from his long residence in the secluded village, had adopted

all the simplicity of the honest farmers round him, together with a little of their roughness ; but a sincerer Christian never lived. He and Fothergill, though one would have thought them as incompatible as oil and vinegar, were on very intimate terms ; their friendship, like the affection of two Paladins of romance, or the more prosaic and less mythical attachment so often observed between two ardent chess-players, being apparently due to no earthly reason but constant antagonism. It must be owned, however, that in all their skirmishes Fothergill invariably took the move and made the attack ; while the parson, like the man of peace he was, confined himself strictly to defence. Or, to vary the comparison, the drum and the drummer were inseparable, only it was always the drummer's part to beat and the drum's privilege to be beaten.

The magnificent affability of Mr. Oli-

phant's bow to the incumbent was worth seeing. There are men who are able to show you, without in the least infringing the rules of good breeding, the exact degree of estimation in which they hold you ; and Mr. Oliphant's bow was that of a monarch to the prime minister he has just appointed to his office.

"I hope you are well, Mr. Fothergill," he said ; "Mr. Truman, I have no doubt we shall be better acquainted before long, and shall work well together. And first, let me thank you most heartily, gentlemen, for this warm reception of yours, as agreeable as it was unexpected." Mr. Oliphant meant the triumph.

"Oh dear, Mr. Oliphant, don't mention it," broke in Mr. Truman, meaning the visit, and speaking with the rather broad Yorkshire accent he had acquired in the dales ; "we are only too glad to see anybody new at Reinsber."

Mr. Oliphant's manner towards the incumbent grew more stately by some inches. Anybody, indeed! Then, to be interrupted in a speech from the throne!

"I don't know about anybody," said Fothergill, noticing the change; "but we are delighted to have the prospect of a little more agreeable society, and the poor have been very anxious for some one to come to the Hall. They have always been accustomed to look to it, you see, for advice, assistance and everything. You'll soon have your hands full if you care to indulge the lazy beggars."

Jabez smiled pleasantly and turned towards Fothergill: "I was going to say, when Mr. Truman stopped me," he resumed, "that I had hoped to preserve a strict incognito on my arrival. I had even gone the length of forbidding my servants to mention the day of my departure from town. Your kindness however found me out."

“ Well, you’ve had a warm day for travelling, Mr. Oliphant.” As some apology for the incumbent’s rudeness in thus interrupting the rounded periods again after being rebuked for his first offence, I may say he was utterly unconscious that the other’s oration was not finished, for it was given deliberately and with solemn precision.

Jabez bowed slightly, but coloured and went on with his own train of thought: “ It was magnificent ” (Joseph imagined he referred to the day); “ the arch nearest the Hall reflects great credit on the designer, and the motto is singularly appropriate.”

“ Ah, now, I’m glad you liked that,” cried the parson triumphantly: “ it was all my doing, that. The flowers were from my own garden, every one of them: I said to our blacksmith last Monday——”

“ But you really should not have put

yourselves to so much expense and trouble," continued Mr. Oliphant, noticing the incorrigible parson and his interruptions no longer ; " it was needless, though I grant it was perfectly natural."

" Oh, 'tis an old cust——"

But Fothergill had begun to suspect Mr. Oliphant's mistake, and prudently changed the subject as fast as possible.

" Well, our Reinsber pageant will scarcely make you forget the London theatres," he said gaily ; " was there much going on in town when you left ? All the managers, I suppose, would be fighting, as usual, for the worst piece ?"

The conversation was now on general subjects for a few minutes, but soon returned to the spot on which, though from different reasons, the thoughts of all were dwelling.

" I never imagined Reinsber was such a beautiful place, Mr. Fothergill," remarked

Kate ; “ it reminds one of the happy valley in Rasselas.”

“ At any rate I hope the princess, now that she has fairly arrived, will not be in a hurry to quit it,” replied Fothergill in a jocosely-surly tone, which was common with him when he paid compliments, so that it was difficult to know whether he meant them or not. “ But I can answer for one who thinks there might be pleasanter places imagined even than this.”

“ Yourself, I suppose,” replied Kate with a smile ; “ I remember in London you were always acting the part of the discontented knight, and sighing for green fields and flowers.”

“ Say watercresses, Miss Oliphant ; I own I always had a weakness for them : you do get *them* fresh at Reinsber.”

“ Ay, that little stream by Tadespit Moss that I showed you, Fothergill, is a famous place for them, isn't it now ?” said

the matter-of-fact parson. "Many a time have I half filled my pannier with them there on a bad day."

"It is very plain, Mr. Truman, I must take you and not Mr. Fothergill as my guide; for he would fill my head with discontent at once. He would think it the proper thing to encore a throstle, and would say that the chandelier in a London drawing-room gives a far pleasanter light than the sun."

"And so it does," said Fothergill; "especially when it is helped out by the bright eyes below; I know you were fishing for a compliment, so I'll give you one. But as to your preferring Truman here for a guide, it is simply absurd: he would always take you one way—towards Stainton and Miss Norber's."

"Now, Fothergill!" said the parson, in a tone of remonstrance, but one that

showed he was not very deeply offended at the allusion.

Kate observed William's sly look, and asked laughingly who Miss Norber was.

"Not a word of truth in it," the incumbent hastened to say; "but she is a lady——"

"Really, Truman, where are your gallantry and affection?" interrupted Fothergill; "a young lady, you mean—of not more than fifty, Miss Oliphant—and she had the good fortune to ensnare our friend here, it is supposed, some five-and-twenty years ago—a case of love at first sight when he came to Reinsber. The picture of her charms—slightly aspiring nose, luxuriant ringlets with just a pathetic sprinkling of time-dust on them, eyes beaming mildly through a pair of light blue spectacles, like a couple of full moons in a clear sky—all this he is of course much more competent

to draw than I am. He is very constant and attentive, calling almost every day to inquire after her health, or, if she has the bad manners to be well, after her little dog——”

“Fothergill !”

“——which seems to be a permanent invalid, and wears flannel. The only thing we cannot make out is why the matter never gets any farther, and we all think he is treating her very badly——”

“Miss Oliphant,” protested the incumbent.

“But after a smooth courtship of a quarter of a century, don’t you agree with us it is a shame? Some think him a gay young Lothario, divided between affection for her and a dozen other ladies as young as herself; and some think it is simple diffidence.”

“Well, you must certainly introduce me to her, Mr. Truman,” said Kate, seeing that the incumbent was not displeased.

“Nay, now, indeed, on my honour it is all a romance,” he exclaimed, able to get a hearing at last.

“Then, there is another reason for bringing matters to a crisis,” Fothergill resumed ; “for if anything happened to that dear little lap-dog, there might be a difficulty in finding excuses for so many visits. Besides, I tell him marriage is a duty he owes to his principles. Don’t you think, Mr. Oliphant, all Protestant clergymen should support their church and themselves by marrying?”

“Now, how in the world is it possible that I should marry?” expostulated Truman. “How can a man take such a serious step on seventy-two pounds, four shillings, and two-pence a year—just think of that? Nobody but a madman would do it, as you know very well.”

“Is that the whole income of the benefice?” asked Jabez in a grave tone.

“Ay, that it is—not that I am grumbling.”

“Mr. Fothergill does the grumbling for you, I suppose,” said Kate silyly.

“Well, it is an abominable thing,” remarked Mr. Oliphant.

“Oh, one’s expenses are not large,” replied the incumbent, who had become accustomed to his lot; “and I get on very pleasantly by the help of a little fishing and gardening. We’ve famous trout-fishing in the Ribble” (enthusiastically), “and you must take it up; I shall be most happy to teach you how to throw a line if you do not know. You’ll find living here very tedious work without it. Only the other day I caught seven] pounds and a half; one fish was nearly a pound and eleven ounces.”

“Have you many poor at Reinsber now?” asked Jabez.

“Not many; and those are so by their

own fault for the most part, drinking—drinking mainly.”

“The farmers here,” said Fothergill, “consider it a duty to their ancestors to get tipsy every market day.”

“This and many other points will require early and most serious attention,” said Mr. Oliphant. “It is the old story over again, I suppose; what was everybody’s business has been nobody’s. All reformation requires some able, enterprising, influential man to take it in hand; and even then the best mode of achieving it is a sufficiently difficult question. But on this subject, I should like at some time to have the benefit of your local experience, Mr. Truman.” The last words were added somewhat grudgingly, as if Jabez thought them only a concession due to politeness.

Joseph, however, improved on Mr. Oliphant’s request, by saying he would be

proud to give him his advice at all times, and the visitors rose.

“ We hope to have the pleasure of seeing you at dinner before long,” said Jabez ; “ to-day we are a little fatigued. But as a remembrance of the day and your kindness, let me give you a small contribution to your poor-box.”

When the two friends were out of the house, and the parson had looked at the note, he found it was for fifty pounds,—nearly as much as his own income. He was both surprised and pleased, but could not help saying :

“ Well, he is a queer fish, Fothergill, however !”

“ Ay, and you’ll have to give him plenty of line,” replied the other, drily. “ He appears somehow to have grown from a smelt into a salmon, since I met him in London—a rather ridiculous change at his

age; I can't quite make him out yet. Miss Oliphant is a fine girl, is she not?"

"Why, I scarcely noticed her face, I think."

"Ah, too busy ruminating on the everlasting charms of Miss Norber, I suppose, thou virtuous and devoted Joseph!" said the other.

As for Mr. Oliphant, he went to bed soon after dinner, well pleased with the events of the day, his grand triumphal entry more especially, and he dreamed of many great plans, and perhaps of the ancient chronicles of Reinsber.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRONICLES OF REINSBER.

FOR Reinsber had its chronicles. Though so small and secluded, it had spread its fame for thirty miles round, and was classic soil to the whole of the Yorkshire dales. Like Gotham, and one or two other villages—oases of staid philosophy in a laughter-loving world—it enjoyed a reputation for extraordinary wisdom, and every strange story of preternatural sagacity was placed by the other dalesmen, without a touch of jealousy, to the credit of the Reinsber carles, as they were styled, so universally allowed was their superiority.

At what period of its history the village first achieved its fame, no one can tell. But, strange as it may be, the fact seems certain that in this remote spot there flourished generation after generation of sages, through a hoary antiquity that dates by centuries. It is sad to think that not a single name out of its long list of great men has been handed down to us. They appear, indeed, to have been engaged in farming, much like the Romans of old or the carles of the present day; but, with a grand humility, they lived and died in retirement, silenced by the greatness of their thoughts, and, like Shakespeare, utterly indifferent to glory.

Nine Reinsber men (where else could we find such devotion to science among farm labourers?) are said to have spent the greater part of a day in endeavouring to solve what is admitted to be one of the most difficult problems in all

domestic economy, viz., how to get a bull out of a field. For five hours did the united nine, with wonderful perseverance and heedlessness of danger, try to lift the huge animal over the gate. The weight, however, was too great, and at last they were compelled to put the bull down, and send one of their number to the village for assistance. As he opened the gate to go through, one of the remaining eight was observed to scratch his head and go off into a brown study—the sure sign of some good idea at Reinsber. After a quarter of an hour's thought, he ventured to ask the rest whether “it wouldn't do to oppen t' yett as Tom had done, and drive t' bull through?” The rest of them began to light their pipes on this, and smoked for an hour without speaking ; for the villagers were remarkable for never giving hasty answers. Then, after talking the plan carefully over, they came to the conclusion that at all events.

there could be no harm in trying it. They did try it, and the experiment succeeded. From that day to this, driving a bull through the gate instead of lifting it over has been the accepted mode of getting it out of a field both at Reinsber and in all the rest of the world—so inexplicably and so suddenly are the greatest discoveries sometimes made, and (for I'll lay my life not one of my readers has ever heard of the village before) so ungratefully are the discoverers forgotten. It is still, however, a custom in the dales to pay homage to the natives of Reinsber by asking them, "Who lifted t' bull ower t' yett?"

In old times when knives were scarce there was only one in the place. It was called a whittle, and when not in use was stuck in a tree in the centre of the green. Some workmen took it with them on one occasion to a wild moor, called Girzliegut Moss, above the village, and when they

were about to return home at night, thought they would save themselves the trouble of carrying the whittle by leaving it where they could find it next morning on coming back to work. The moss, however, was a wild, bare spot, without a tree, wall, or stone to serve as a mark. But, as usual, Reinsber ingenuity triumphed over difficulties. They observed a remarkable cloud over one part of the moor—a cloud which they would be certain to recognise when they saw it again—and directly under this they placed the whittle. To be sure they were not able to find it next day, for the mark itself, by some strange freak of nature, had moved off, and was no longer to be seen. But though the whittle was lost, and there has been a good deal of carping at them on this account, surely such censures are undeserved, for it is palpable that neither the Reinsber mind nor any other

human intellect whatever can contend with Nature when she chooses, out of sheer malice, to balk us. Besides, it is said that the carles have not even yet given up all hopes of recovering their favourite whittle, and for several generations have been anxiously watching the moor for the reappearance of the same cloud over it.

But perhaps their most successful achievement was the following. Grave fears had been long entertained that the neighbouring cliff, which is something like a quarter of a mile long and a hundred feet high, would come down bodily on the houses and overwhelm them; and one of the usual Reinsber councils, consisting of the whole population—for the danger was universal, and where all were so wise it would have been folly to exclude any one—was held on the green to consider the matter. Sweet village, how I should have enjoyed being present at one

of these sage deliberations of the olden time ! How often, standing on thy little bridge, have I tried to restore in imagination the pregnant silence that must have brooded over them, the thoughts slowly given, short and sententious, which found utterance only every half hour or so, the endless pipes, the puckered brows, the solemn head-shakings of disapproval, the weighty nods of approbation ! On the present subject there were many opinions, all worth listening to, no doubt, but the one which finally prevailed was a miracle of engineering talent. It was suggested that the dangerous cliff in question should be bound round with a long rope, and tied tight to a great oak which stood on the rock a hundred yards from the edge. The device was adopted and answered wonderfully ; for the cliff is standing, even now, after many hundreds of years.

Again to discover new uses for a thing was

of every-day occurrence in the village. When the little bridge was first built there by a strange architect employed by government, the whole place, as may be supposed in the case of persons who had never seen such a thing before, was lost in wonder and speculation. What *could* it be for? On the day when the bridge was completed and ready for traffic, some of the carles returning home from a fair reached the new erection just as a shower came on. Not at all suspecting the real use of the structure, they followed the old road to the water's edge, and were fording the brook by the stepping-stones as usual, when it occurred to one of them that the bridge had been put up by the king as a shelter for the passers-by during such heavy rain as was then falling. The theory appeared most plausible, and, not to seem ungrateful to his majesty, they—though of course with considerable discomfort to themselves—took

shelter under the bridge in the middle of the stream, till the shower was over, but it did strike two of the party simultaneously “’at he might ha built t’ biggin i’ a drier shop, an’ he wad.”

It has always been the misfortune of genius—especially in remote parts—to have its discoveries pirated, and its best thoughts stolen. The merit of some of the grand ideas I am now about to mention has been claimed, I believe, for other places, but the Yorkshire dalesmen maintain stoutly that the credit of originating them is due to Reinsber. It was there, they will tell you, that the remarkable thought of walling in the cuckoo first had birth. The sager intellects of the place had noticed that whenever they heard the cuckoo it was spring, and hence they inferred that if they could keep the cuckoo all the year round they would have perpetual spring, and “a rare time for t’ kye.” Accordingly they

watched the bird to a little grove near the houses, and during the night built a wall round the trees. In the morning, when the cuckoo flew to a higher branch, by immense exertions they raised the wall to a corresponding height, and were just about to put the roof on and secure their wishes, when—oh, perverse fate!—the bird took a hop, skip, and flutter into the air, and was gone.

It was at Reinsber first, if you listen to the dalesmen, that a farmer tried to wheel sunshine into the barn to dry his hay, and that thrifty wives bought oilcloths for the kitchen floors because sand was so expensive. The monkey which clapped a fuse to a loaded cannon and looked up the barrel at the same time to see what would come of it, is said to have spent some years of its life at Reinsber; and while one native of this place is recorded to have sent skates and warming-pans for sale to the

Brazils, it was on the hint of another who had an office under the Dutch government, that the latter got an immense profit by selling provisions at exorbitant rates to some town they were besieging. It was at Reinsber that the brilliant notion first occurred to man, when you had dug a hole and did not know what to do with the earth, of digging another hole to put it in. It was at Reinsber that a shrewd cattle-dealer, observing that everyone else brought his cattle from the north to the south, hit on the plan of taking the opposite direction, and driving his to the north to sell—with what gain, except experience, tradition does not state. It was at Reinsber that an old woman, when a Methodist chapel was about to be built near her house, on some ground leased for nine hundred and ninety-nine years, petitioned that the lease might be extended, for fear the rubbish of the ruined chapel might, at the end of that time,

block up the road to her garden. Perhaps this instance was prudence in excess, but in fine, the traditions current in the dales with regard to the village are simply innumerable.

Such had the village been in ancient times. At present, I fear, its inhabitants have somewhat degenerated, and have little of the strange wisdom which characterised their forefathers. Like the dalesmen generally, they are a staid, cautious, independent race; with a bull-dog tenacity of purpose that is highly edifying; shrewd at a bargain, and reverencing wealth, if anything; men averse to demonstration, but with hearts in them somewhere which it is hard to reach, harder to rouse, and hardest of all to lay; a race of height, breadth, and muscle, scarcely to be matched in these islands.

However, I cannot but think that a good deal of the best blood of the Reinsber

sages must have run in the veins of Jabez Oliphant, and I consider it one of the most fortunate circumstances of my hero's life that the principality he had taken it upon himself to administer was already memorable. Many historians have thought it an unhappy thing for a prince to be called on to rule a nation which is famous, and I do not deny that in such a position success is less easy, and failure more ridiculous ; but, for my part, I have little fear that Mr. Oliphant will be found to disgrace the reputation of his sagacious ancestors.

CHAPTER V.

MR. OLIPHANT AND THE CRAVEN DIALECT.

“**D**O come into the drawing-room, mamma ; there is capital fun going on. Uncle has caught a native, and is learning the Yorkshire language from him. He is a farmer, or something, and the most comical fellow I have seen for a long time. Do come.”

Miss Oliphant had run out into the garden to seek her step-mother. The latter had now reached the Hall, and was a little, thin, weird-looking woman, very primly dressed in black silk. Affecting youth—though it had long fled—she did not wear the ordinary matron’s cap on her glossy

hair. She had been a governess before John Oliphant married her, and as she had plotted and manœuvred a good deal to catch the handsome widower, her triumph made her fancy ever afterwards that her genius lay in intrigue. Some of her West-end acquaintances were ill-natured enough to assert that, like many parvenus, she was occasionally superior in manners to the upper ten thousand themselves ; but of her character we shall see more anon.

“ A farmer in the drawing-room ! ” she exclaimed faintly but bitterly ; “ really, I wonder what Mr. Oliphant will do next. And I am expecting the Highsides every minute ; Mr. Truman said they were coming to call to-day. How very awkward ! ”

“ Bother the Highsides ! Pray come ; I am sure he will amuse you.”

“ What a pity it is, Kate, that you allow yourself to be so excited ! I have told you

over and over again that well-bred people never suffer their feelings to rise above a certain point. Your cheeks are just now as much flushed as if you had been running a race ; and all because you have heard an intensely vulgar fellow breaking his rude jests in your uncle's drawing-room. Mr. Oliphant's heiress, I should have thought, would not condescend to be aware of the existence of such a man."

"But, mamma," replied Kate, who was undutiful enough to enjoy teasing her step-mother a little now and then, "he is such a size that no one could possibly be in the same room without seeing him ; and as to his being vulgar, I am sure he has more of the gentleman about him than many who call themselves so. I should have fallen in love with him, only he is so fat, and says he has a wife and six 'bairns.'"

"Kate ! But I am perfectly aware your expressions are not always as refined as I

could wish." (This was said with a sort of bland waspishness.) "Well, I suppose I must go and see if I can get him away in time."

Machiavelli—to whose 'Prince' I shall sometimes refer, as both in Mr. Fothergill's opinion and mine there was in some respects a great though unconscious resemblance between Mr. Oliphant and the Italian's ideal monarch—Machiavelli remarks that there are three ways of keeping a newly-acquired principality; the first, to ruin it; the second, to inhabit; and the third, to govern it by deputy. We have seen that Jabez chose the second of these methods: for the third interfered too violently with his wishes; and as to the first, why, he was so far from desiring to ruin Reinsber, that all his thoughts, good man, were bent on finding the best means of improving it. With this object he had spent the three weeks since his

arrival in a strict and conscientious study of the place.

Now three or four weeks is not a very long time to understand three or four hundred people in ; but we must not measure a genius like Mr. Oliphant's by the common standard ; for in that space, partly by observation but chiefly by intuition, he had qualified himself fully for his great task. He had satisfied himself by frequently strolling through the village, that its inhabitants rose at five and went to bed at nine, or earlier, to save candles ; that they had breakfast at six, dinner at twelve, tea at four, and supper with praiseworthy punctuality at eight ; that they gathered in little knots at the corners during the noon hour or at night after work, and smoked and dozed, and 'talked and dozed again ; that their conversation was endlessly about the weather ; or, if that was perversely steady, about 'yows'

and fat 'stirks,' with just a spice of curiosity, to give zest to life, about their neighbours' doings.

He had come to know the names, too, of several of his subjects, and exchanged a 'good morning' with most of them in his sublimely patronising way; had observed that Tommy Doolittle, the grocer, had on an average three customers in a morning; that a cart was an event, and a carriage a miracle; and that at most times of the day there was nothing to be heard in the quaint little village but the sound of the beck or Goody Hawkswell's very shrill voice, and no live thing stirring but himself and a great gobbling turkey, which promenaded the silent streets as constantly as Mr. Oliphant, and with almost as proud a consciousness of the grandeur of the destiny to which Providence had called it.

But with even sharper eyes had Jabez looked out for the faults of the rustics.

Failings, alas ! like other people, they had in abundance. The “Red Lion” and the “Black Unicorn” drove a roaring trade, and there were certain assignations of the lads and lasses on Sunday nights, and at other times that were rather pleasant, no doubt, than moral ; nor would an ordinary observer, perhaps, have approved of the farmers living only—as many of them did—for the scraping together of pounds, shillings, and pence. Nevertheless, Mr. Oliphant, with characteristic originality, passed by these little defects : perhaps he considered them trivial, perhaps irremediable ; and I have even heard it suggested that he was grandly unconscious of their existence, more especially since his own tours of observation were always taken with royal regularity at one time, and that in the morning, when nothing of the kind was going on. However, if he was acquainted with these pec-

cadillos, for some wise reason doubtless he took no notice of them, and as the cardinal fault of the dalesmen he fixed on—their want of reverence.

What confirmed him most in this opinion, was his meeting a tipsy farmer, who was staggering home from Stainton market, and who remarked as he passed (being probably struck with Mr. Oliphant's magnificent bearing), "Well, owd Gruff-and-Glory, ye're lat for t' market, but if ye're quick ye'll happen be i' time for t' dance at neght." "Sir!" however, was deigned to this kindly intended piece of information.

"I observe this failing," he said to Mr. Truman, "in their single attendance at church on Sunday: they have not enough veneration for God to attend His service twice. I observe it in their frivolity. I observe it in the slighting manner in which they speak of the majesty of the law itself

when it does not happen to suit them. I observe it in their bold speech and deportment on all occasions : why, sir, would you believe it ?—many and many a time in this village, when I have nodded to some labourer I knew, the fellow has nodded back in the most familiar manner—yes, sir, to me ! Now, in the south, the inferior invariably touches his cap with the greatest deference in a similar case. Our aim, Mr. Truman, must be to teach them above all things reverence, humility, and obedience.”

Want of respect, then, for Law, God, and Mr. Oliphant being the cause of all evil at Reinsber, the head of Jabez had become choke-full in these three weeks of schemes for supplying the deficiency. But he had made leisure to form acquaintance with the richer people of the place, most of whom had already called at the Hall, and he had mentally apportioned out to these,

who might be considered his aristocracy, the share of assistance they were to render him.

There was Sir George Augustus Highside, the pompous old baronet from Highside Castle, near Stainton, and his son, Harry Highside, a pair well-matched in abilities, except that the son did understand horses, and the father nothing. There were Fothergill, Truman, and Mr. Hawtrey, the shrewd master of the grammar school; Mrs. and Miss Mansfield, lately the owners of Reinsber Hall, and still living in the village; and last, not least—at any rate in dimensions—the fat squire at the other end of the place, Robert Carlton by name, with a good-natured wife and two daughters, all nearly as stout as himself.

But in his preparation for the task before him, Jabez found an unexpected difficulty on the threshold. During his long

residence in London he had utterly forgotten the rich though rugged dialect of his native place, and now could hardly understand a word the farmers said. He began, therefore, to study 'Craven,' comforting himself with the reflection that many governors-general must have been older when they began Hindustani, to say nothing of Cato, who learned Greek at eighty.

He plodded, accordingly, through the best glossaries; but, as he soon found that mere book-knowledge would not serve his purpose, the notion occurred to him of getting some dalesman to help him, and the day after he formed this determination, he met the very man for the purpose, Dick Wideawake—a magnificent specimen of the Yorkshire farmer, standing six feet three in his stockings, and of girth and weight to match.

"Good morning, Mr. Wideawake," said

Jabez, as the farmer's great red face rose and beamed good-humouredly on him.

"Nay, Mr. Oliphant, mister me na misters," answered the other, nodding; "I'se plain Dick, all'ays, wi' aw t' dale, an' I'll be obleeged to ye if ye'll caw me sae. Howsomdivver, I wish ye good morning aw t' saam."

"Well, then, Richard," said Mr. Oliphant, compromising the thing, as 'Dick' seemed rather low, "I want a little help. Can I speak a word with you now?"

"Ay, twenty if ye like. Aa man, I'se all'ays ready for a crack an' a gill wi' ony man. Yan's tongue's like a lamb's tail when it's souking: it will be wagging. But if ye've ought to say, Mr. Oliphant, let's gang into t' 'Lion,' an' I'll treat ye—ay, begow but I will," he added, misinterpreting a slight look of dignified surprise, which came into the other's face.

But Jabez "thought it better to proceed

to the Hall, where they would be free from interruption," and explained on their way that he would like to understand something more of his native dialect.

"Thear, now, that comes o' living sa lang amang Cockneys; I wonder, for my part, howiver ye can manish to speak English at aw," said Dick, when his companion had finished. "I niver seed a Cockney nobbut yance, but he wor a capper. It wor yan sloppy neght just as we were 'bout lapping up and ganging to bed, ther com a girt ran-tan to t' dooar; sa I oppened it an' thear wor a lile hop-o'-my-thumb mak of a fellow, 'at looked as if he'd bin built by contract—sae mich for t' job—an' thin an' cheap they'd done it. 'Cawn you let me have something to eat, my good mawn?' says he, draaling it out just as if his words wor shillings, an' he didn't like to part wi' 'em; 'I've lost my way in the mist.' 'Surely, surely,' says I; 'come in an' rest

ye, an' we'll mak ye some'at hot; ye're welcome.' Sa wi' that he com in, an' we dried his claes for him, an' Mary—that's my wife—frizzled him a good fat bacon-collop an' we med him as comfortable like as we could. But what d'ye think t' lile beggar did but sit at t' hob-end, gieing hissel airs like a lord, an' niver speaking a word auther to chick or child but 'Yaas,' or 'Noa,' when I axed him a question, an' ordering t' sarvant about wi'out sa mich as 'please,' or 'thank ye,' or ought! Then he cocked up a lile bit of an ee-glass 'at he hed, an' stared at her through that, till she blushed again at his gangings on."

"Some counter-jumper out for his holid-ay," suggested Mr. Oliphant.

"I judged sae, but thinks I, whaiver ye be, young man, I'll tak ye down a peg afore I've done wi' ye. Howiver, I let him finish his supper, as wor nobbut mannerly, an' then he began piking his teeth an'

glowring at Mary again as she cleared t' things away. 'Now, hev ye done?' says I. 'Yaas,' says he, 'what for?' 'Acos if ye've quite done,' says I, 'I'll trouble ye to pike yersel off at yance, an' when ye caw in again ye'll happen bring yer manners wi' ye.' Well, he stared a bit at that, but gat up to start; sae as he was ganging out at t' dooar, he offered me a shilling. 'Nay,' says I, 'ye'd best keep yer brass; I think ye'll want it o' t' rooad.' At that he went as red as a cow-tongue, an' spreed hissel out like a cock 'at's boun to feight, an' says he, 'You're an insolent fellah; do you know who I am?' 'Yi,' says I, 'ye mun be t' son o' t' owd man 'at said he knew he'd bin a varra bad un hissel, but onyhow he'd manished to bring up a son 'at 'ud show 'em aw ther could be somebody warse.' Well, wi' that, what does t' lile hell-cat do but ups wi' his fist an' fatches me a slap reght o' t' lug! Nae

Yorkshireman could stand that, ye know, sa I gat hod on him by t' scruff o' t' neck an' t' waistband—see, I'll just show ye, Mr. Oliphant, how I held him ;” and the giant, borne away by the excitement of his own story, and his anxiety to render it clear, made a dead stand on the causeway, and was actually advancing his huge brown paw towards the sacred neck of Mr. Oliphant.

The latter's surprise and indignation at Dick's act of unconscious disrespect were immense. But then he scarcely saw at the moment a way of resenting it without loss of dignity, and the poor fellow knew no better, and he might besides be so useful, and—in short there were a hundred reasons why Jabez only interposed his hand deprecatingly, and said in haste, “No, no, Richard ; I assure you I understand what you are saying, though it is Craven.”

“Why, bless ye, Mr. Oliphant, what, I wadn’t harm *ye*!” cried Dick, with a great jolly laugh. “I nobbut wanted just to show ye how to hod a chap if iver ye’ve occasion. Howiver as ye’re sa flaid o’ yer baans brekking wi’ looking at, I willn’t try it.

“Well, then” (resuming his walk and narrative), “I kept him weel out at arm’s length, an’ I wor sa mad, I nobbut med three steps on’t to t’ duckpond, wi’ him yowling an’ kicking an’ plunging about like a yearling, an’ when I gat thear, it wor just ‘yance, twice, and in ye gang!’ Aa, but he wor a nice seght when he piked hissel out at t’other side, wi’ t’ mud fair siling off him. ‘Now then, young man,’ says I, ‘ye’ve itten an’ ye’ve liquored, an’ ye’ve hed yer dessart, sae ye’d better gang.’ Then he shakt his neif at ma, an’ teld ma if ther wor law i’ the land I sud hev it, but I niver heard nought mair on him. An’ I fancy he mun ha teld ’em aw i’

Lunnon what mak of a duckpond ther wor at Sandy Topping, for I've niver bin troubled wi' ony Cockneys sin' then."

By the time Dick ended his long story, the incongruous pair had arrived at the drawing-room, the only place in the Hall which was yet thoroughly habitable. Here they found Kate, to whom Mr. Oliphant briefly introduced his companion.

"Well, if iver!" said Dick, seating himself with much discernment and self-possession in the easiest arm-chair, which however seemed too small for him; "I didn't think sich pretty roses 'ud grow i' Lunnon fog, Mr. Oliphant."

Kate blushed and laughed: she was pleased at the compliment, it was so evidently sincere. "And I did not think, Mr. Wideawake," she answered, "that I should find flatterers here; but the roses, such as they are, are certainly due to your Craven air."

“Whya, whya,” said Dick, flattered in turn, for he was thoroughly patriotic, “I’se noa saying but we hev an advantage ower Lunnon *thear*: ye see, amang t’ hills we git wer air first-hand.”

Thus they chatted on, mutually pleased, whilst Mr. Oliphant, having ordered a supply of whisky and water for the unbashful Dick, armed himself with a quire of foolscap, and drew up his chair to the table, where he sat bolt upright, pen in hand, and ready to note down any uncommon word he might hear.

“Why, I’se hauf flaid o’ ye, Mr. Oliphant, ye look sa fierce,” exclaimed Dick, with a burst of laughter, when the preparations were complete. “Yan ’ud awmost think ye’d swallowed a hagworm, or wor a lile tarrier ’at hed bin set watching a rat-hoil aw day, an’ hedn’t hed a click at ought. Ye didn’t sarve a prenticeship to a chancery barrister ’at wor waiting for

suits, did ye? Well, well, earstia," he added, lifting the glass to his lips.

Jabez had shuffled uneasily on his seat during the first part of Dick's speech, but he began writing with the utmost eagerness as he caught the last word.

"What's that, Richard? What's that? Would you be good enough to spell me that last word? EARS—What does it mean?"

The farmer spread his grey eyes in astonishment; then, as he understood what Mr. Oliphant wished, burst into another laugh. "Ay, begow, now ye do cock yer lugs; now ye hev cotched some'at; but I'se blessed if I can tell ye what it is, efter aw—fish, flesh, or fowl. Nobbut I knaw it's what we all'ays say hereabouts when we first tak a drink. But ye mun ax them 'at's mair scholars nor me what it stands for. Ears-ti-a," he repeated, musingly.

Mr. Oliphant wrote the strange word

down, and waded afterwards through many glossaries to find it, but without success. He had even written a letter to a philological journal with his own explanation, when Mr. Hawtrey suggested that the Craven farmers occasionally drop their *h*'s, and that the true phrase was, "Here's t' ye!" short for "Here is health to ye!" Jabez, however, who was a well read man, and as ingenious as a Greek commentator, had discovered no fewer than seven different reasons, why a man's 'ears' are exactly the most appropriate part of his person to be mentioned in a drinking salutation, and he always maintained that the rest of the word was Scandinavian; but his promised letter on the subject never appeared.

It was at this juncture that Mrs. Oliphant, having been fetched in by Kate, as we described at the beginning of the chapter, entered the room. Beyond a dubious

‘Oh!’ on Kate’s saying, “This is Mr. Wideawake, mamma,” she took no notice of the farmer, but went and seated herself near her brother-in-law.

“Are you aware, Mr. Oliphant, that the Highsides are coming to call this morning?” she inquired, in tones of subdued indignation.

“Well, Mrs. Oliphant? I suppose we shall be glad to see them,” returned Jabez, quietly going on with his writing.

Foiled in this direction, she renewed the attack in another, with a winning glance thrown at Dick across the table.

“I am sure Mr.—Hum—Mr.—Hem—would not mind coming another day; we are expecting callers this morning.”

“Oh, ay,” answered Dick, who had an inkling of the state of affairs, but was not inclined to leave such first-rate whisky without doing full justice to it; “but if it’s Sir George, mistress, ye may show him

up—I'se be glad to see him. His son an' me are as thick as thack."

Kate laughed outright at the turn Dick had put on her step-mother's entreaty :

"You are a friend of everybody's, for miles round, I suppose, Mr. Wideawke?" she said.

"Whya, miss, as to nodding to 'em, an' chatting wi' 'em, and swapping a bit o' horse-flesh wi' 'em now an' then, sae far I knaw 'em gay weel. But as to friends, Lord bless ye, t' mair ye want, t' fewer ye'll hev. They're like t' watter i' a basin, er friends—sae lang as t' basin can hod itsel up, t' watter's thear aw reght; but just let it trundle itsel ower o' yan side, an', aa my! but t' watter's gaen afore ye can say Jack Robinson. Friends er shy o' poor folk like me; but ye'll hev 'em about ye, miss, like flies round a sugar-cask. What a buzzing they will mak! Don't they, now?"

Mrs. Oliphant here looked up from a book which she had taken and was pretending to read with an air of total indifference to Dick's presence : " Perhaps friends should be of the same station in life, and then—" she remarked. " Kate, did you not arrange with Williams to see about the roses in the garden this morning ?"

Kate, however, " was sure her interview with the gardener would do very well in the afternoon."

" Ay, ay, mistress," was Dick's comment, " there's na doubt if t' sleeve isn't o' t' saam stuff as t' coat, they'll gang badly together. But i' ony station, as ye caw it, yer friends 'll think twice as weel o' ye if they hear a bit o' yallow-boy music i' yer pockets. Now, I sudn't think ye wad hev sa mony friends yersel, mistress, afore ye married Mr. Oliphant's brother ; hed ye, now ?"

The question was put in Dick's most

respectful tone, but there was a wonderfully merry twinkle in his eye at the same time.

Kate looked serious when Mrs. Oliphant, without answering, returned to her book with a slight toss of the head and took no further share in the conversation ; but over Jabez's face there came a grim smile, which he only prevented by an evident effort from becoming a downright chuckle.

“ But you say you are poor, Mr. Wide-awake,” remarked Kate, slyly ; “ I thought you a man of substance.”

Dick laughed his great, honest guffaw.

“ Begow, but ye've hit me thear, Miss Oliphant. I weigh twenty-three staan ten pund afore dinner, an' it'll ha bin a poor do if I don't fotch twenty-fower at-efter. But I'll tell ye what, Mr. Oliphant, ye willn't find mony men, 'at weigh like me, 'at er as lish an' handy, auther. It isn't fat, it's muscle. I've walked sixty-two mile atween

sun-rise and sun-down, an I'll feight, walk, or bargain wi' ony chap i' t' dales, I don't care wha it is ; an' onybody 'll tell ye as mich if ye mention my naam to 'em—Dick Wideawake, fra Sandy Topping. Well, come now," he continued, helping himself uninvited to a second glass of whisky-and-water, "ye're curious about Craven, sa I'll gie ye an owd sang i' it ;" and without waiting for permission, to Mrs. Oliphant's intense disgust, he struck up, in his deep, rich voice, a humourous song well known in the dales, and beginning :

"At Clapham town-end lived an owd Yorkshire tyke,
At dealing i' horse-flesh ther ne'er wor his like."

At the end of the song Kate applauded and insisted on hearing it again. Mr. Oliphant, too, "would be glad to have another opportunity of taking down some of the very peculiar diction in it."

Dick therefore started again, and had

just reached the third stanza, when a servant threw open the door and announced Sir George and Mr. Highside.

Mrs. Oliphant sprang from her seat in dismay, murmuring a piteous "There, I told you how it would be," to Jabez, who received the words with a provokingly unconscious stare.

The plump, red-faced baronet, too, as he advanced into the room towards Mrs. Oliphant, nearly came to a dead stand of surprise on catching sight of Dick seated so comfortably by the side of the whisky-bottle. Sir George had doubted for some time whether the representative of the Highsides could call on a City merchant without loss of caste, and it now struck him that his doing so was decidedly a mistake.

Mr. Highside, however, a tall young man, with very light hair and moustaches, and whose shyness in female society was

great, was much relieved to see an old friend there in Dick ; and when the first salutations were over, gladly dropped anchor under lee of the farmer, whose colossal dimensions promised a very efficient shelter.

As for Mr. Oliphant, he rose with great politeness, but a little real impatience at the interruption, while his niece looked on an amused spectator of the whole. Dick alone was perfectly unconcerned, his only thought being whether he had better go on with the song immediately or wait a bit till they got settled.

“We are very glad to see you, Sir George,” said Mrs. Oliphant, with an affectionate humility, which proved that, after all, her amiability only wanted opportunity to show itself; “but I do so much wish we had been better prepared for the honour of your visit. Our house is yet unfurnished, and we have only one room at

the service of—of everybody” (viperish look across the room).

“I was busy studying the peculiarities of the Craven dialect by the kind help of Mr. Wideawake,” said Jabez.

Sir George accepted Mrs. Oliphant’s apology with a gracious bow, and replied to the other :

“Oh, you City people are obliged to mix familiarly with all kinds of persons, I suppose, sir?”

“Why, it is only right that one should condescend a little whenever there is any good to be gained or done by it.”

“Hum, certainly; and how do you like the Craven dialect? Very rough, eh?”

“It is rough, no doubt, but by no means vulgar. I would rather look on it as a bit of old-world talk which, from an accident of position, has been untouched by civilisation; the latter seems to batter at words

till they are both lessened in size, and have all the angularities knocked off them, just as shapeless stones are ground down into nice, smooth pebbles by the tide. Besides, the Craven contains many Norse and old English expressions, which have dropped out of use in most parts, and it is, perhaps, the best commentator we have on many doubtful passages in the old ballads, and even in Chaucer and Shakespeare themselves. On the whole, therefore, I should be sorry to lose it. It has one advantage over many of the English dialects : it is extremely like the lowland Scotch, which is now made classical by the pens of Scott and Burns."

"Well, I think Burns overrated, and I've never read a line of him. He was nothing but a low impudent radical, and I believe has done more harm to church and state with his rascally songs, than any dozen men put together. I had actually

my tailor quoting him to me the other day ; Bobby Burns, he called him."

"That is something like practical fame, though, is it not?" remarked the other with a quiet smile.

"You were a native of this part, I think?" said Sir George.

"Yes, my father was a shoemaker here at Reinsber ; still, I always claim," replied Mr. Oliphant pleasantly, "to be considered a scion of a great family, for there were ten of us. They are all gone except myself, but I find it very agreeable to return to the old place. It is scarcely changed at all." Mrs. Oliphant winced and thought her brother-in-law need not dwell on unpleasant circumstances in the family history, but Jabez rose in the baronet's estimation by his frankness.

"I hear you are the only fixtures in the country, Sir George, except Penyghent yonder," said Kate, referring to an old

wives' saying common about Reinsber, that there would always be a Highside while the hill stood.

"It must be very nice to be the head of such an old and distinguished family," said Mrs. Oliphant, who, owing to the continued presence of the farmer and the necessity of watching him, had not been sufficiently at ease to take much part in the previous conversation. But her present remark made Sir George think her a very agreeable woman.

Meanwhile, Dick and Mr. Highside were holding a far more animated dialogue on the merits and demerits of a 'tit' which the farmer had sold him; but at length Mr. Wideawake, after carefully finishing his whisky, raised his voice and inquired, "Mr. Oliphant, wad ye like me to end that sang for ye, acos I mun be jogging?"

Mrs. Oliphant blushed, and Sir George lifted his double eye-glass to his nose and

surveyed the speaker for a moment, then dropped the glass, took a pinch of snuff, and gave a slight shrug of contempt, the contempt being pretty equally distributed between Dick and the Oliphants generally.

Not therefore however did Jabez say the less courteously, "Thank you, Richard ; you are very kind, and I am greatly indebted to you for your assistance. But I should like to hear the song again when I can pay stricter attention to it ; unless Sir George wishes to have ' At Clapham town-end ?'"

"Thank you, thank you, sir ; heard it often ; written by a Highside gamekeeper in Sir Philip's time."

Dick, therefore, got under weigh and left the coast clear for Mrs. Oliphant, who had been anxious to go and seat herself by Harry, but had hitherto been deterred "by the smell of that man," which she asserted did not get out of the room for a week.

"I heard you talking about horses, Mr. Highside," she said ; "I am told you are the best rider in the county."

"No, really, now," answered Harry, well pleased and twirling the end of his small moustache ; "but who could tell you that?"

"A certain little bird who often tells me things," replied Mrs. Oliphant. "Riding must be a delightful accomplishment ;

To feel my steed
Floating like proud seas under me,

as the poet says ; you remember the passage?"

The young man "thought he did," but as the lines were given with more animation than correctness, a total ignorance of the quotation would have been excusable. A dim notion, however, came across him that the verses were from the poet's corner in *Bell's Life*, but he did not venture to say so.

“I do so much wish that Kate would take to horse exercise, now that she is come to reside in the country. Do you not think you could be eloquent enough on the subject to persuade her to do so? Kate, dear, I was just suggesting that you should learn to ride.” And Kate, pitying the diffident young man, came and joined in the conversation.

Harry looked up and took one glance at the beautiful face before him; then his eyes fell, and he coloured at his own boldness.

“You’d find it jolly fun, Miss Oliphant,” he remarked.

“What, the being run away with, or the being thrown, or the being played at battledore and shuttlecock with? Which of these is jolly, Mr. Highside?” asked Kate laughing. “I suppose you never meet with such mishaps, but I have tried them all in turn.”

“ You do ride, then ?”

“ A little, but alas ! I soon found out that I was more afraid of the horse, than the horse of me.”

“ A little tuition by a first-rate rider would soon cure you of your nervousness, dear,” said Mrs. Oliphant, watching Harry to see how he took the hint.

“ Well, I don’t know,” he said bluntly ; “ I’ve seen fellows that would face a house on fire, boggle at the first shy of a skittish mare, and never cross a horse’s back again. Now, there was Tom Coverdale of the 95th, a plucky chap enough, and a d—d good hand—I—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Oliphant ;” but the naughty word that had slipped out discomposed Harry so much that Tom Coverdale’s invaluable experiences remain to this day a mystery.

The two old men meanwhile had been gradually coming to a better understanding of each other. Sir George’s estimate of

his neighbour had especially risen when he found that Jabez had bought for the 'mere bagatelle,' as he called it, of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds an estate on which the baronet had long set vain, though willing, eyes. Birth might be the grandest gift of God, but after all riches were a power that must be recognised.

When the visitors were gone, Mrs. Oliphant was loud in their praise, especially because they had been so "affable."

"The affability must have shown itself in looks then, not in words, mamma, so far as Mr. Highside was concerned; for he was as sparing of them as if he wished us to believe, poor man, that he had never heard of the proverb about the respective values of speech and silence."

"Ah, Kate, it is not every one who has had such advantages as you have had. He has not seen much society, but he would

soon improve, and it is not necessary for a man in his position to speak much."

Jabez had looked up from his writing-desk at Mrs. Oliphant's first remark, and he now said quietly ; " It strikes me, Mrs. Oliphant, that you misapplied the term ' affable ' just now : the word is not appropriate to the intercourse of equals."

" But surely we are scarcely on a level with the Highsides ; remember the baronetcy."

" Psha ! I consider myself the equal of any Englishman living, and of much better men than the Highsides," retorted Jabez ; and Mrs. Oliphant did not dare to pursue the subject, but left him to his writing.

CHAPTER VI.

BEGINS HIS REFORMS.

MR. OLIPHANT was now too impatient to delay the commencement of his reforms any longer, and one bright morning in June he issued forth in state with the object of inspecting any nuisances that might exist in the village. "Dirt and vice," he argued, "go hand in hand ; the one saps the body, the other the mind ; and mind and body act and react on each other. Hence the greatest rulers have ever made the sanitary condition of the people their first consideration." In one word, men must be kept alive if you would do them good ; a proposition which philosophers will

readily admit, though I believe it has been doubted by certain philanthropists and most theologians.

He was dressed with scrupulous care, and a tall footman in blue with snow-white stockings followed him at the distance of a few yards, moving when he moved, and stopping when he stopped. As he proceeded, a retinue of boys and girls also gathered about him, and with open mouths expressed their awe and admiration. Indeed it was by no means an every-day sight, the imposing way in which the old man came to attention opposite each offensive middenstead, and after surveying it with a look of dignified remonstrance, took a few strides along the edge and then silently motioned the gorgeous footman to bring him the gold pencil and note-book, by which the dimensions were recorded. Before each open drain too he stood for two or three minutes, sniffing in, with head

thrown back, the exact amount of damage inflicted on the neighbourhood. When he had carefully examined the midden itself, he proceeded to call on the owner, and, after a few prefatory remarks on the weather, to give Hodge time to recover himself, explained that he wished to have the nuisance removed, but was willing himself to pay for its removal; meeting all the objections which the astonished and conservative mind of the carle could urge.

This he did with such infinite courtesy that only in one case did he encounter decided opposition. Goody Hawkswell, the postmistress, kept a small shop for groceries, a less stylish rival of Tommy Doolittle's establishment on the opposite side of the street. Her tongue, however, was so much dreaded that, from sheer fear of it, her neighbours patronised her more than Tommy. On one side of her house was a large midden with an excellent frontage on

the main street, and Jabez unsuspectingly made his way into the shop with his most civil ‘good morning.’

“Now, what do ye want?” asked Goody Hawkswell by way of reply, with a tart emphasis on the personal pronoun. She was hard at work scrubbing the floor with her sleeves tucked up, and did not stop in the operation at all.

“A very fine morning, Mrs. Hawkswell.”

“Happen it is, happen it isn’t; I hevn’t bin out to see. What do ye *want*?” scrub—scrub—scrub.

“I think you do not quite know who I am.”

“Yi, ye’re t’ new man at t’ Haw :” scrub—scrub—scrub.

“Not the man, my good woman,” replied Jabez, smiling affably at her mistake; “I am Mr. Oliphant himself.”

“Why, didn’t I say soa? Will ye tell

me what it is ye want?" scrub—scrub—scrub.

"Really, Mrs. Hawkswell :—I wished to speak to you about your ash-midden."

"Ass-midden!" screamed the vixen, raising herself on her knees and putting her steaming fists on her hips as she looked defiantly at him ; "and what about t' ass-midden? What hev ye to do wi' it, I sud like to know?"

"Well, I consider it a great eyesore and very detrimental to health."

"Ye do, do ye?" scrub—scrub.

"A kind mother like you, my dear Mrs. Hawkswell," added Jabez, making a diplomatic shot at a venture, "would not wish her children to catch a fever and die, or to grow up poor, puny, sickly things instead of being strong and hearty like yourself."

"An' wha dares to say ought again' my childer? They itt enough to be well, at ony rate ;" scrub—scrub.

“I do not doubt that for a moment; I was merely speaking of the future. But you would have no objection, I am sure, to my being at the expense of removing the midden.”

“Ye! I sud like to see ye or ony other man touch my midden.”

“But you could easily place it farther from the house, could you not? You see it actually projects on the pavement,” persisted Jabez.

“Nay, I isn’t boun to stir it or hev it stirred, auther; but ye’re welcome to come an’ layke on it wheniver ye like—an’ yer footman too.”

Mr. Oliphant’s face grew red with anger: “You are not very civil, madam,” he said, “but if you will not accept my offer, I shall force you to remove the nuisance.”

“Force me, will ye? We shall see about that.” And Jabez retreated, having had slightly the worst of the engagement, while

the virago detailed to all her neighbours in the course of the day how she had told “yon girt babby up at t’ Haw ’at he might come an’ layke on t’ midden whenever he liked.”

Tommy Doolittle opposite was more complaisant, for the meek little grocer had been previously drilled by the dictatorial wife whose appendage he was, and who had already heard from the village gossips something of the purport of Mr. Oliphant’s visit. “Now, Doolittle,” said she, with the forefinger raised menacingly, “if he comes here, mind ye’re as civil to him as if he was your own wife—ye can’t be too civil : tell him ye’ll be glad to do anything that lies in your power, and give him plenty of ‘sirs’ in your talk ; these great folk like it, and it will happen be a good thing for us : they must use a deal of groceries up at the Hall, man.”

Accordingly when Jabez stepped in to

complain of an open drain near Tommy's house, the grocer, with a profusion of fluttered obeisances, expressed his great delight that there was at last a chance of this dreadful nuisance being abated, now that the matter was really taken up by some one of influence. The drain had long been a source of very great annoyance to him ; he even thought that his paleness, thinness, and usual want of energy (more popularly ascribed by the carles to the strict discipline under which Mrs. Doolittle kept him, and to his preference for tea), nay that his baldness itself arose from the same cause ; and he ended by asking Mr. Oliphant if he wanted any other article to-day. Jabez retired therefore with a most favourable impression of Tommy's character and abilities, and Mrs. Doolittle had no reason to regret her sagacious advice ; for the Hall footmen paid almost daily visits thenceforth to the shop. In fact, "that open drain," Mrs.

Doolittle often remarked afterwards, “ was the best thing that ever came near their doors, and she would not have minded for her part if there had been a dozen there.”

The last visit of inspection which Jabez made, was to the limekilns, about a quarter of a mile above the houses. On one unlucky day as he was wandering up the stream, he saw that it was whitened for a few yards by a tiny runlet which once or twice a year made its way from the limekilns to the brook that ran through the village. He immediately returned home and read up in some medical work the pernicious effect of lime on the human stomach. Horrible ! Here was a whole population being poisoned for the sake of one lime-burner ; but, as the kilns were on Mr. Oliphant’s property and the lease was just out, he had the remedy in his own hands.

“ If you wish to have a new lease, Mr.

Shepherd," he said, "I will give you a choice of two alternatives. You may either remove your lime-works to another part of my land where they will not pollute the stream ; or you may dig a trench to the river and carry the dirty water away without its coming near Reinsber."

"Ye mun be joking, Mr. Oliphant," said the puzzled Shepherd, scratching his head ; "*thear* are t' kilns, ye see ; how am I to skift 'em ? What, each of 'em cost me mair nor a hundred pound."

"Well, then dig the trench. Think of the Roman aqueducts, sir."

"Trench an' hack-wi-ducks ! Why, how could I git leave, d'ye think, to gang digging up folk's land ? Besides it 'ud cost mair nor aw t' boiling's worth. Ye're joking, surely !"

"I was never more serious in my life, sir. I am truly sorry for you if what you say is the case, but the public good is our

first consideration, not that of the individual. You may suffer a little—I cannot help that; I wish I could—but the people of Reinsber cannot be allowed to drink water with fifty per cent. of lime in it. Think my offer over.”

Shepherd did think it over, and the result was that in a few days afterwards, when the lease expired, the limekilns stopped work, and ten or fifteen labourers were thrown out of employment: but, as Jabez philosophically remarked, it was all for the advantage of society at large.

Mr. Oliphant returned home as satisfied as a sportsman who has had a good day. He had bagged thirty-one ash-pits, seven cess-pools, and three open drains, to say nothing of larger game in the shape of the limekilns. All these he duly entered in a thick foolscap note-book, labelled “Nuisances,” and ruled with various red

lines, the entries standing something as below :

Name of Owner	Nuisance	Nature	Remarks
Thomas Doolittle	1 drain	Open	Most civil. Has suffered much from it. Looks ill and pale ; good witness. Deserves encouragement.
Mary Hawkswell	1 ash-pit	Near the street	Postmistress. Extraordinarily insolent. N.B.—To inquire how she manages the post-office.

Miss Oliphant came in while the old man was busy in these labours, and he gave her an account of his proceedings. Even great men feel the necessity of a confidant, and Jabez, breaking through his ordinary reserve, had consulted her often in the last three or four weeks about his various projects, while the sanguine little minx, partly out of affection for him, and partly because she was as eager for everybody's good as he was himself, had encouraged him in

them, though she reserved to herself the supreme right of teasing him on the subject.

“But, uncle,” said Kate, when he had ended his narration, “I cannot for my life imagine what you are giving yourself all this trouble for?”

“Then you are scarcely as quick as usual, Kate. By removing these nuisances, we shall lengthen the lives of all the good people in Reinsber.”

Kate laughed and exclaimed: “But have you never read the inscriptions on the tombstones in the churchyard? There is scarcely any one lying there who has not lived to eighty; and how much longer does this dear wise uncle of mine expect to make people live?”

Jabez was somewhat posed. “I confess I never looked in the churchyard; but statistics bear me out in what I am doing, and all modern civilisation rests on statistics.”

“ Ah, then, unless that is a figure of speech, I foresee a dreary time coming. We shall all have to live by arithmetic,—just the thing I never could do. Dear me, think of being forced to sleep by proper fractions, and get married by interest! And I suppose I shall have to go and see Goody Hawkswell seven times a year because seven is a magic number. What a disagreeable world it will be !”

Fothergill, a frequent visitor at the Hall, was now announced, and Kate turned to him : “ Mr. Fothergill, uncle and I have just settled it, that the world is going to be a world of arithmetic for the future. You and Mr. Truman will have to go to school again to learn accounts.”

“ If you’ll be schoolmistress, I’ll do so ; and submit to a good deal of caning, too, before I play truant.”

“ But I should be very severe ; masters

always are who do not know much about what they are teaching."

"To hide their own faults, they 'hide' their pupils, I suppose. But when are these wonderful lessons to begin?"

"Immediately, of course. You must reckon up for me instantly how many roses there will be on my favourite tree this year: here are pen, ink, and paper."

"The calculation is too simple to require them. Let me see. There will be 201. Is the answer correct?"

"I will tell you that in a month," said Kate, laughing; "but how do you get such a queer result?"

"Why, a hundred will come out because it is Miss Oliphant who wishes it, and another hundred to have a look at her; and there will be one, I hope, for myself—which makes 201, doesn't it?"

"Is there not something in mathe-

matics," asked Kate, "which they call a complementary or complimentary number? But you shall have your rose if the answer is right."

"I hear you have been engaged in a very useful work to-day," said William, turning to Mr. Oliphant.

"Yes," replied Jabez; "Reinsber is certainly in a disgraceful state, but I hope we shall put it to rights before long."

"My only fear is, you will excite a great deal of ill-will."

"I do not care for ill-will, sir. The man is very mean-spirited who dares not do a great public good in spite either of ill-will or opposition; and, if any opposition arises, I will soon trample it down."

"Still calumny is not very pleasant to bear."

"As to both flattery and calumny, Mr. Fothergill, I agree with Politiano's famous dictum; they cannot raise or deject me,

any more than the lengthening or shortening of my shadow by the sun could make me think myself a taller or a less man than I am."

Mr. Oliphant was called out of the room soon afterwards ; and Fothergill continued on the same subject to Miss Oliphant :

"I am afraid this is really rather a foolish business your uncle is engaged in."

"Foolish ! I thought you told my uncle it was a very good work."

"So I did, and so it is ; only I doubt the policy of doing it all at once, as he is doing it."

"But how should it be done ?"

"Little by little ; the world is a naughty boy, and will only take its physic after a great deal of coaxing, and with a big spoonful of syrup to each drop of the medicine."

"Yes ; tact—tact and management are necessary if you wish to carry a point," said Mrs. Oliphant. "But, poor Mr. Oli-

phant ! I fear he will never have either ; and I cannot understand what he wishes with his alterations, when things are so pleasant."

" Ay, the world is pleasant enough—for persons of fortune and position," answered Fothergill, with ill-disguised satire.

" Well, I am altogether with my uncle," said Kate proudly ; " when a thing is right, do it and do it at once. And I think the former residents here have not tried to make these improvements even little by little."

" No, faith ; more to our shame," replied William. " But I like your uncle much, and should be very sorry if he became unpopular."

When he took his leave, instead of going home, he lighted a cigar, and paced about for an hour on the road in sight of the Hall.

" I shall have my rose, shall I ?" he

thought, triumphantly : “ but that was an unlucky hint of mine about the old do-tard’s magnificent midden-poking. Her eyes fairly blazed in her scorn of my doctrine of expediency. I wonder now what business I had to be advising them for their good, when all they want is praise. Honest advice—ay, a pretty fool’s gift to his friends ! It is like carving wood with the back of a jackalegs knife, is honest advice ; one makes no impression on the block and cuts oneself : I’ll forswear it for the future. It is confoundedly unpleasant, though, having to fool the good old fellow to the top of his bent ; but it is plainly the only way to keep in with her ; and I think I mended the matter by that protestation about infinite affection, etc., for her uncle : that must have been touching from me. Well, she is a splendid creature, but I am scarcely in love yet, thank heaven, and I will take care not to be till I see how I

stand with her. As Mrs. Oliphant says, the world is not a bad place at all if one does not spoil it by having too much feeling; but that is the deuce. I wonder which is her window."

And so moralising, our friend took his way homewards when he had finished his cigar.

CHAPTER VII.

SCHEMES.

“**I** HAVE been wondering, Sir George, who that dark man in armour between the windows there can be. Is anything known of him? It is a very striking face.”

“The face of a hard hitter at any rate,—ha, ha, ha! Portrait of an ancestor of ours, Mrs. Oliphant—Lord Highside, the first Harry in the family: we were attainted afterwards and lost the barony. He fought at Poitiers and was called the Grim Baron, but I never heard much harm of him except his roasting two or three Jews alive and imprisoning two or three dozen of our serfs

till they died. The bones were visible in the dungeons below us till about a hundred years since."

"Dear me, it is very dreadful to think of," said Mrs. Oliphant, elegantly adjusting her scarf.

"Ah, they did not think much of a trifle like that in the good old days. I'll warrant he only acted as every other gentleman acted then—he would not have been a Highside, ma'am, if he had not."

"Well, how very pleasant it is to have such interesting reminiscences and traditions in the family! I often think of all things in life it must be the most delightful to be able to look back on a long line of illustrious ancestors; it is a happiness that falls to so few. What poet is it that says 'I'd rather be an English nobleman'—ah, I forget the words, but he means he would rather be a nobleman here than a king anywhere else."

"Quite so, quite so; just what I've often

said," replied Sir George: "I would not change with any beggarly foreign prince of them all. I've kept a nice bit of breast here; pray let me give you it, Mrs. Oliphant."

"Thank you. And who is that young cavalier above the mantel-piece? He has a history, too, or I am mistaken in that roguish look of his."

"You certainly do hit on the more remarkable of these portraits in a very extraordinary way" (it never entered the baronet's head that Mrs. Oliphant might have been reading up for the occasion). "That was Sir Francis, the handsomest of our family. The Merry Monarch gave him with his own hands the silver cup you see yonder on the sideboard. Andrews, bring Mrs. Oliphant some champagne in King Charlie's cup." This was the highest honour Sir George could confer, and marked a very rapid progress on Mrs. Oliphant's part in his good graces.

“I did not intend to take any more wine, but I really must be able to say that I have drunk out of such an invaluable relic. How beautiful it is! The figures on it seem to be nymphs and satyrs;” which, curiously enough, was also the conjecture hazarded about them in the guide-book to the district, so that the author was probably right. The cup however was judiciously applauded by Mrs. Oliphant, together with the rest of the baronet’s stock-stories about his ancestry, his filberts, his apples and his cabbages; for none of these were ordinary things—they were the apples, filberts, and cabbages of a Highside, and had pedigrees as long as that of the family itself.

“I do not see many portraits of ladies,” Mrs. Oliphant said by and by; “but I suppose members of a family like yours have always married beautiful heiresses? By the way, I heard the other night that Mr.

Highside yonder was to be married before long."

"Harry!" exclaimed the baronet in astonishment, and Mrs. Oliphant knew by his tone that Harry was still unattached. Her white lie had answered its purpose.

"It was only village gossip, no doubt. People will talk, you know, and most of all, as is natural, about those who stand highest. You are happy in having such a son, Sir George; and how pleasant and lively he is to-night! Kate and he seem to have plenty to talk about, do they not?" The hint was of the broadest, but then Sir George required broad hints or he would not understand.

Yes, Mrs. Oliphant was scheming. She had set her heart on a marriage between Harry and her step-daughter; but it was, of course, necessary that the proposal should come from the Highsides, and for the sake of the proprieties which she revered so

much, she would even like the baronet to fancy that the notion was altogether his own. She flattered herself, however, that she had adroitly set his thoughts to work on the matter; for Sir George went off immediately afterwards into a state of solemn reflection, from which he scarcely awoke till the ladies rose.

It was a state dinner at Highside Castle in honour of the Oliphants, and there were many other schemers at table—at what table are there not? There was Fothergill keeping his own end of it alive with jests or satire, but scheming all the time how he could secure a long chat with Kate when they went into the drawing-room; and sitting next to him there was Dora Mansfield, not perhaps scheming, but at least wishing, ah me! she knew not what, and I dare not say; only her quiet Madonna-like face was turned shyly but admiringly towards her neighbour during his sallies, for she had

never seen him so brilliant before. There was Kate opposite from pure pity scheming out subjects of conversation for that shame-faced Harry Highside who took her in to dinner but had scarcely a word to say ; and there was Harry himself, fascinated and pleased as he was, yet altogether out of his element, and contriving various plans for getting a cigar before the ladies were gone ; while even the honest parson was scheming to procure a seat in one of the Reinsber carriages, the night being very wet. Above all, there was Mr. Oliphant himself brooding over a grand scheme of which we shall hear more soon.

When Mrs. Mansfield, who was filling the place of hostess, had retired with the other ladies to the drawing-room, Sir George rubbed his hands complacently, and settling himself more firmly in his chair, called for another bottle of the famous Twenty port. “He did not believe, not he,” he said, “in

that new-fangled plan of leaving the table directly after the ladies; the Highsides had always been two-bottle men, and so would he be himself as long as he lived;" and his nose, pleasantly inclined to a rubicund stoutness, might have made a stranger credit the assertion; his friends never even doubted it. Harry and the fox-hunting squires who were present, also seemed preparing for livelier chat about hunting, shooting, pretty ankles, or anything in the world that was not too serious.

They were soon undeceived. Scarcely had the fresh bottle arrived and brought fresh vigour to the conversation, scarcely had the baronet raised his glass to wink at it with one eye and make his usual remark on the occasion, "That's a good glass of wine, Truman,"—when Mr. Oliphant, who had been very silent hitherto, suddenly addressed him from the farther end of the table in a decided voice that put a stop to any other conversation.

“Sir George, I wish for your advice, if you please, about a project which has cost me much anxious thought and labour; and I trust that these gentlemen also will be inclined to assist me.”

“Most happy, Oliphant, I am sure—anything in my power,” replied the baronet; while “Oh, certainly,” rose in chorus from all parts of the table. Every one was wrapt in attention—Fothergill hardly able to keep his countenance at the magnificent way in which Jabez drew himself up for his exordium.

“Well then, gentlemen all, I think you will agree with me that the state of the lower classes in Reinsber is far from satisfactory. When I came back from London after my long absence, I expected to find my native village inferior indeed to cities in refinement and the appliances of modern civilization, but at any rate immeasurably superior to them in honesty, in morality, in

godliness. I had fancied that in this little nook, so secluded from the world and its follies, there might still remain an Arcadian simplicity which would remind one of the golden age of yore. How was I deceived ! I found the village absolutely reeking with drunkenness and debauchery, its four public-houses full, its one church empty, and the whole of the poorer classes, instead of improving their minds, altogether given up to pernicious amusements—dancing, [card-playing, novel-reading, and frivolity ; irreverent to God, for they neglect His day, and equally irreverent to their superiors here, such as yourself, Sir George.”

“Confounded poaching lot of fellows there, at any rate ; wish you could catch some of them and just let me know,” broke in one of the squires ; but Jabez went on.

“Shall we then allow this deplorable state of affairs to continue—we, men of the

first influence and position in the neighbourhood, and whose duty and high prerogative it is to lead these poor misguided people to better things? Surely not. Let us inculcate virtuous principles into them; it is a knowledge of virtue they want. O, Virtue, how beautiful art thou! how far above gold or rubies! how sought after by some! how despised by others! Yet how soon under thy glorious influence would the mists of vice and ignorance vanish away like a dream from this delightful spot!"

"Good, very good," applauded Truman, who liked a little floweriness in a discourse.

"And so well-timed and prepared!" whispered Fothergill to him.

"I say, Fothergill," groaned Harry, in an undertone, "how long will you keep that claret at your elbow? Don't you see I'm choking? By Jove, I thought we

should have had a jolly good chat now, and here we are in for an hour's sermon, by gad! This beats Truman, this does." As for Sir George and the squires, though considerably astonished, they contented themselves with leaning back sheepishly in their chairs, and offering double libations to their own capacious stomachs.

"But," said Fothergill, aloud, "but if we grant your premisses, Mr. Oliphant, that Reinsber is very wicked, what is your remedy?"

"Co-operation, sir. Without co-operation where at this day would be the world? It is co-operation which has built our roads, bridged our rivers, delved our mines. It is gigantic co-operation which has spread a network of railways over Britain, which has flashed the electric lightning into every village, which has covered the ocean with our sails. We can co-operate for the paltry purposes of trade, art, or civilization—for

gold, fame, or power ; shall it be said that we do not think it worth while to co-operate to secure for this benighted village that which is worth them all—that virtue which should be the aim, end, and perfection of our lives ?”

“ Then, in other words,” said Fothergill, “ you wish us to form some kind of society for making the Reinsber carles better ? It is a truly noble idea, and I, for one, shall be delighted to give you my very best assistance, if indeed you will accept such poor help :” and the young hypocrite looked as pious as he could, for Kate’s sake.

“ I shall be proud of your help, Mr. Fothergill, and I am obliged to you for so readily tendering it,” replied the other with his sweetest smile, and Fothergill felt that he had risen a hundred per cent. in the old man’s estimation by being the first to see the merits of his project. “ I shall ex-

pect much assistance from you too, Mr. Highside—young, active, and enterprising, what might you not do?”

He had turned so suddenly on Harry that the latter blushed like a schoolgirl; for, to tell the truth, he had been furtively getting up a whispered conversation with his next neighbour on the merits of the Bradford Giant and Southern Pippin, who were to have their great ‘mill’ next week.

“Oh yes,—yes, of course,” he answered, ruefully and dubiously; “I suppose it’ll be giving tracts and looking up the old women, and so on—oh yes. I don’t think it is much in my line—I’m better at a five-barred gate, and that sort of thing, you know, Mr. Oliphant. But if you like, I’ll try my best,—with Fothergill here.”

“And no one can do more,” replied Jabez, graciously; “but perhaps the toils of our committee may not be of the kind or

quite so great as you suppose ; Sir George, I trust I may count on you ?”

The baronet started up from the slight doze into which he was rapidly falling : “ Hum—ha, well,—I don’t quite understand the thing ;—but if it is an affair for a subscription, I should be the first Highside, sir, who ever declined to head a public-spirited thing.”

“ It is not money I wish for, Sir George, but your name, your influence. The committee” (hereupon Harry cautiously went back to the squire) “ must be men who could induce persons to join the society, and would overlook the conduct of the members ; these members being of course entirely of the poorer classes.”

“ The rich not requiring virtue, I suppose,” whispered Fothergill to Truman.

“ Nor would I confine myself simply to

persuasion. In due proportion to their advancement in virtue and religion, at the end of each year I would give prizes, not of value—for virtue, I hold, should be its own exceeding great reward—but still honourable badges of distinction, which the recipients may hand down with lawful pride to their children's children. And for awarding these prizes, what plan so excellent as that of giving marks for every virtuous act which the member has performed throughout the year? The acts of which we take cognisance, and the number of marks given for each, would be settled by the committee; and the member who won the greatest number of marks would have the head prize for the year."

"Admirable!" exclaimed Fothergill. "Why it would be nothing less than a grand competitive examination in virtue for

all the village!" Then he relieved himself with a hearty laugh, as if at his own notion.

"If you like to put the thing in that way, so it would," replied Jabez, smiling faintly in response; "and I do not see why the competition which discovers merit at our schools and for public offices should not be pressed into the service of morality. I trust that now you see my scheme in its details, you will allow me to put your name on the committee, Sir George."

"Oh, if you like: but I am an old man; you must not look for much help from me, you know.—Have any more wine, Oliphant? Then, perhaps, we had better join the ladies." The baronet's tone was lugubrious, and the attraction of the sex was seldom strong enough to draw him into the other room so early.

"One moment, please. I think, gentle-

men, that Mr. Fothergill, Mr. Truman, and myself would be competent to draw up rules for the Society."

"Hear, hear!" cried the rest, much relieved to find themselves left out.

"But what name do you propose to give the Society, Mr. Oliphant?" asked Fothergill.

"Why, I thought the best would be 'The Society for the Promotion of Virtue.'"

"Take a wrinkle from a Society our friend Truman has heard of: for Promotion read Propagation; but I do not know which is best."

"'The Society for the Propagation of Virtue?' Yes," said Jabez, balancing the merits of the two words, and choosing the longer; "it is the better name, and we will adopt it."

Meanwhile the fair ladies of our story

were variously employed — the squires' wives and daughters with gossip, needle-work, or engravings, and Mrs. Oliphant, who had just shown her consummate tact towards her superiors, in displaying it in another way to her inferiors by making herself what she called 'generally agreeable.' Giving, therefore, with a well-bred precision, the same time to each of her acquaintance, she praised the knitting, inquired with the utmost minuteness after all the children at home, including one or two that were dead, and flattered an aged spinster amazingly, by trusting her husband was well. But on one lady she thought it proper to bestow a larger share of her attention ; for she told good-natured Mrs. Mansfield—lately the owner—how delighted she was with Reinsber Hall, its park, and the view from its windows. She would be very glad, she said, to see her there often ; they had got everything very

nice *now*,—she was afraid to say how much the furniture had cost: but it was very cruel that she (Mrs. M.) had never yet called on them, and had only sent a card; how was it? And poor Mrs. Mansfield was forced to admit, with a little moisture about the eyes (for she had only one sore point, but Mrs. Oliphant had touched it), that since her husband was compelled to sell the place, just before his death, she had not had the heart to go there; an avowal which called forth all the sympathy of the other's superior nature.

But as they passed into the drawing-room, Kate had put her arm round Dora Mansfield's waist, and said, "Now, Dora, I am going to have a good chat with you as soon as we can find a quiet corner. Here we are." In spite of their different dispositions and fortunes, the two girls were already warm friends, and saw a good deal of each other.

“ Well,” said Miss Oliphant, as they sat down on a sofa by themselves, “ if this is a fair specimen of your Reinsber dinners, I cannot say I think them very lively. I have paid well for mine, I know. Fancy sitting between Mr. Carlton and Mr. Highside for two hours, and working hard at talk the whole time ! I shall have brain-fever or something.”

“ O Kate, I hope not,” answered Dora, quite deceived by the other’s tragic tone.

“ You silly little puss, you always take things so seriously,” replied Kate, laughing ; “ I am only in fun, you know. But how I did rack my brain for something to say to that stupid young man ! I tried music, and ‘ he thought he had heard of a fellow called Handel,’ — the barbarian ! Then, did he sing ? No ; but he had been told he could if he tried,—and I fancy he would believe anybody who told him he could write an epic poem, or make a steam-

engine, or anything. Dancing, was he fond of that? Well, rather; he had been to a ‘grand hop’ not long before, where they had ‘first rate grub and *such* sherry-cobblers.’ In despair, I turned to more sober subjects, expressed in most eloquent terms my admiration of flowers—paintings—the beauty of the neighbourhood; it was all of no use; I was pumping at a perfectly dry well. He listened admirably, to be sure, but the decanters on the table did that. Had he read many novels? Yes, a good many. Well, here was a gleam of light, but it turned out he had not read any I like, and I am sure I have never read, and never shall, what he is so fond of—French things of Sue’s or somebody. I was forced to beat a retreat again, and then I fairly asked him if he believed in the man in the moon: I know it was wicked, but I could not help it; he is so simple. At last I carried him off to the

stables, and put him on horseback, and then he soon cantered on quite out of my reach. I left him engaged in a rat-hunt ; poor fellow, I hope he has got his arm safely out of the hole, for he was up to the elbows in it after one of his terriers when I escaped."

"Mr. Highside never has much to say ; but I am very sorry you did not enjoy the dinner more ; I thought it livelier than usual."

"Ah, but then you were sitting next Fothergill," said the other, with an arch smile ; "how well he did talk !"

Dora's lip trembled as she answered quickly, "I am sure Mr. Fothergill talked far more to you than me, though you were on the other side of the table."

"Dora, Dora, Dora !" Kate whispered, "you are in love ; you are hopelessly and desperately in love. Do you think I did not see ?"

“Miss Oliphant, how can you say so?” expostulated Dora, raising her eyes to her friend’s face; and there was an encounter, front to front, for a moment, of two of the loveliest pairs of eyes in Yorkshire—one very mournful, the other, how laughing! but the contest was soon over, and quiet little Dora looked down again, vanquished.

“How can you say so?” she repeated; “it is not kind. I am sure I am not.”

“There would be nothing to be ashamed of, if you were in love: I intend to fall desperately in love myself some of these days; but I do not think much of Mr. Fothergill. To be able to talk well is not quite everything, and he is so dreadfully cynical. I do not think he has a heart at all: and I am like Sydney Smith; I do like a little heart sometimes.”

“Now you are doing him injustice.

After my father—after his misfortunes—and death, Mr. Fothergill was very, very kind to us, when few people were.”

“And who durst be unkind to you? Tell me who they were, dear,” said Kate, with a fiery gleam in her eyes.

“Nay, I should be doing wrong if I said any one was positively unkind; but most people were very cold to us afterwards, and some even talked at us a little.”

“Who did so?”

“Well, I think the worst were those old maids at Stainton—the three saints of Stainton, Mr. Fothergill calls them,” and Dora laughed faintly. “But then we cannot expect, when we have become poor, to be treated quite as we were treated before. I have no doubt they only did what they thought right.”

“The three saints of Stainton—just let me come across them, that is all.”

“O Kate, surely, surely you would not refer

to the subject before them," pleaded the other; "I would not have mentioned them for the world, if I had thought you would do so. We have suffered a good deal—a great deal—and I assure you we should like best of all to be quiet. And they have such bitter tongues, I do hope you will be civil to them; they will be dreadful if you are not."

Kate laughed, but made no answer.

"So we could not help liking Mr. Fothergill, unless we were very ungrateful," continued Dora, after a pause; "but I do not think I shall ever marry. I often dream about these sisterhoods which they are instituting in England. I should like to retire quite away from the world, and spend my life in doing good and trying to make myself better."

"You are a true little saint already," answered her friend; "and we will have no nunneries for you."

Soon afterwards the gentlemen came into the room, and there were songs and music ; Fothergill and Kate joining in duets, and Dora listening with a little pang about the heart as the voices blended sweetly together. But before the company broke up, Mrs. Oliphant found an opportunity of making another move in her own game, by seizing on Harry.

“ I have scarcely had a word with you, Mr. Highside,” she said. “ This is a charming old castle of yours ; it reminds one of those glorious feudal tilts and tourneys we read of.”

“ Hm, certainly ; jolly old chaps, no doubt,” answered Harry, at a venture. “ But the castle has no conveniences at all : my smoking-room is the dingiest little hole you ever saw ; and the billiard-room is right at the top of the round tower. When it’s mine, I’ll pull the whole place down, and build a real handsome modern house,

square and in something like taste—see if I don't."

"I hope you will not sell the old portraits at any rate, for I have been admiring them all dinner-time. Do you know that Kate says she thinks you are very like that young cavalier over the mantel-piece? But I cannot quite see the resemblance myself; has it been remarked before?"

"No, really, but did Miss Oliphant think so?" cried Harry; "why, it is Sir Francis, and they call him the handsome baronet."

"Well, and if they do, why should not a Highside now be as good-looking as a Highside then?" Then the carriages were announced, Truman congratulating himself on having secured an inside seat; but Fothergill staid to have a cigar with Harry.

"D—n it, Fothergill," said Mr. Highside, as he threw himself into an easy chair after lighting a cigar and ordering some punch, "this society of Oliphant's about

virtue may be a devilish good thing after all ; the cads about here want looking after and taking down a bit, don't they ?”

Fothergill, who had stretched himself out at full length on the sofa, glanced at the other and laughed sarcastically.

“Yes, Harry,” he replied, “and you and I shall make two famous apostles, shall we not ? I can make the Reinsber carles wise in heresy ; and you will be able to teach them, if not the narrow way, at least the way of swearing pretty broadly.”

“Jove, Fothergill, but you have me there ; I'll tell you what, I'll bet you a ten-pound note that I'll swear against any man you like to bring, for ten minutes a side, and neither of us to use the same words twice. Come, will you take me ?”

“Nay, Harry, you have your gifts,” growled Fothergill ; “you are matchless there, and I don't think I could find anybody except in Billingsgate even to challenge you. Still I

should like to see you handing a tract to Goody Hawkswell, or feeding Mother Tenant with barley broth, and receiving the old hag's blessings between the spoonfuls. But I say, old fellow, was not Oliphant in high feather to-night? It was as good as a play to see your father and him; 'twas like seeing plump and rosy little Bacchus ('Bacchus, Apollo virorum,' the god of wine, you know—you must remember *that*, man) bound with his own vine-branches, and obliged to listen to a long discourse from one of the Pilgrim Fathers."

"It was too bad; now don't you think so? At a dinner-table! Hang it, I hope the governor will not ask him again, with his cursed preaching."

"I rather enjoyed it; it was a bit of a change from the ordinary humdrum of talk. And then, you know, if Mr. Oliphant doesn't come here again, the pretty niece can't. By the bye, you were making great

sail in that quarter to-night ; it is not fair leaving us poor fellows so far behind."

"Stunning girl," replied the flattered Harry, with a knowing wink ; "never saw such a pair of peepers in my life, and how her neck is set on ! She'll be a tidy trotter, let me tell you, whether she runs single or double. Give me plenty of blood, and not over much flesh or bone in a girl or a horse. Then there's her ankle ; have you ever noticed it ?"

"Stop there, thou irreverent Harry," answered Fothergill, half inclined to laugh at the other's characteristic metaphors, and half indignant. "Of course I have, but we ought not to talk our friends over quite in this way."

"I don't see the harm myself ; we were saying nothing but good of her, were we ? But I say, Fothergill," he added in tones made confidential by the punch ; "I find I can talk like a brick when I want."

“Who ever doubted it, man?”

“Ay, but I mean with the girls, you know, stupid. I never thought I could before; but I see it is only when I have not the right sort by me. We did rattle on, I can tell you, and I don’t think I ever stuck fast for something to say, though we talked about all kinds of things.”

“Well, why don’t you blaze away at once, a dead shot like you, Harry, and bring her down? A handsome, thorough-bred, rising three but clever enough for seven, first favourite for a baronetcy,—any girl would leap at you, you know.”

“Hang it, Fothergill,” said the other, “I believe you’re quizzing me; but I never do know whether you are laughing at me or not.”

Thus all the personages in our story went off to bed tolerably satisfied with the evening—all except poor little Dora, who sat gazing out on the moonlight for a long

time through the open window of her bedroom, with a feeling of dreariness she could not at all understand, but it was connected somehow with Fothergill and Kate. "Yes, they were made for each other : he so clever and good, and she so very beautiful," was the substance of her thoughts ; " and I do not know why it should not be so, but I hope Kate will teach him to think more about religion ; oh, I do hope she will. What a thing it was to say that I was in love with him ; but it was only her nonsense, I suppose." And then she added to her prayers a heartfelt petition, not without tears, for the happiness of both her friends ; but she did not sleep that night nearly so well as usual.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STORM GATHERS.

STANTON was privileged in being the residence of numerous old maids, most of whom were amiable enough to have deserved a dozen lovers ; but the ladies whom Fothergill called the Saints of Stainton lived in three large houses midway between the little market town and Reinsber. Occupying this responsible position, and having borne themselves for thirty years as the native aristocracy of the district, they had snubbed or patronised every one in both places till they were taken at their own estimate and admission to their sober tea-

tables became the blue ribbon of Reinsber society.

Some three or four days after the events described in the last chapter, Miss Ayrville, Miss Manby, and Miss Beecroft, the strong-minded spinsters in question, were met in solemn conclave at the house of the first-named lady. It was an old-fashioned gloomy place, with odds and ends of furniture gathered during a life-time, and matched the appearance of Tabitha Ayrville herself, who was verging on seventy and was very tall, big-boned and grim. If you had seen her marching along at her ordinary slow place with the head erect, a cold superiority in the eyes, and a foot as firmly set down as if she were mistress of the whole earth, you would have thought her a tragedy queen rehearsing her part as she walked. But she did not trouble herself to speak much, and was too great to argue, only woe to the poor fellow who ventured to dispute

her edicts ! Not for him were the well-buttered delicacies of the Ayrville muffins, or the sweet voices of the sisterhood. She had cut one acquaintance because he would not agree with her that Pope is our greatest bard, and she never really forgave a second who persisted in admiring the nineteenth century.

Maria Ann Manby, a thickset woman of sixty, and the daughter of a small yeoman, prided herself on her out-spokenness, meaning thereby that she would tell you, and most offensively, all your faults, but be carefully silent about your virtues. She wore her hair in ringlets, and, where the natural growth was scanty, had supplied the lack with a front which hung down in short crisp curls ; so that her great masculine face, blotched with purple, had something of the stern and threatening appearance of a Gorgon's head. Letitia Beecroft felt no little satisfaction in being fully two

years junior even to Miss Manby, and laboured hard to keep up appearances. She rouged terribly, had both false hair and false teeth, and some said, a still falser smile. She had never recovered from the honour which Miss Ayrville and the yeoman's daughter had done her in admitting the child of a poor incumbent like herself, to be one of the amiable triumvirate. In return however for the grateful, and indeed humble, homage which she paid them on this account, there was a tacit understanding that they at least should always consider Miss Beecroft a lady comparatively young. It was a delusion immensely gratifying to her, and not without a certain reflected pleasure to the others, for whilst she stood at youth they could scarcely sink to the freezing-point of age themselves. Fothergill, who was fond of a nickname, called Miss Ayrville the Dictator, and the others the Heavy Dragoon and the Christian

Skirmisher, because he said Miss Manby always charged directly at you, while Miss Beecroft manœuvred insidiously under cover of extreme piety.

Miss Beecroft in considerable excitement had just entered the room where her friends were seated.

“Have you heard, Miss Ayrville?” she asked.

“Have I heard what, Letitia?”

“About Mr. Oliphant,” ejaculated Letitia, still out of breath.

“I wonder at you, Letitia, keeping us in suspense,” said Miss Manby, tartly.

“Dear Maria, please do not look at me in that stern way ; I will tell you as soon as I can. He has given a harmonium to Reinsber Church—there !”

“What ?” “I don’t believe it !” exclaimed the others simultaneously.

“Oh, how harsh you are this morning, Maria ! Indeed, indeed, I heard it from

Mr. Truman himself just now—he was at the bridge fishing in his best coat with Silverwood's rod, just till the funeral came up—and he did assure me that Mr. Oliphant had really done so."

"Maria Ann," said Miss Ayrville in her calm judicial voice, "I always told you there was no good in that man."

"Did I ever say there was?" asked Miss Manby; "it is simply monstrous."

"It is more than monstrous; it is impossible," said the Dictator.

"Nay indeed, Miss Ayrville, Mr. Truman told me that he had actually accepted the gift; I cannot possibly be mistaken."

"Compose yourself, child. It is very possible that poor Mr. Truman may have accepted it, but we have not."

"No, indeed," cried the more violent Miss Manby; "what, a new man in the place, and the son of a common cobbler, who has cobbled my father's shoes many a time—

to dare even to think of such a thing without consulting the old residents ! I never heard of such bare-faced impudence in my life."

" I thought you would not like it," murmured Miss Beecroft.

" Like it ! The church has done very well without music for us ;—I think it might have served for a cobbler's son."

" Just what I thought."

" And he—phaugh !—must come and teach us what is right and proper, transmogrifying the place till we don't know our own village !" said Miss Manby.

" What can his reason be, I wonder ?" asked Letitia timidly.

" His reason, child ? his reason is plain enough : he wants to show how much richer he is than any one else, and to get us to call on him. I wish he may ! I am only surprised at the Highsides tolerating such a low-bred fellow."

“Perhaps it is because they are only gentlemen; if there had been ladies at the castle, might it not have been different?”

Miss Ayrville, who had not spoken or listened to the others for some time, now broke in on Miss Manby’s invectives and delivered judgment.

“Maria Ann,” she said, “this cannot go on. We must put them down.”

“Of course we must, there is no doubt about that,” Maria answered.

“I shall be most happy, you know, to do anything; but—but who is it?” inquired Letitia.

“Why, whom have we been talking about, you silly girl? The Oliphants, of course,” replied the Heavy Dragoon.

“And we must do it at once,” Miss Ayrville continued.

“Oh, how soon you do see your way through a difficulty, Miss Ayrville!” applauded Letitia.

“The sooner the better. I shall be on pins till I give this man a bit of my mind,” said Miss Manby. “Let me see. They will be at this party at the Carltons’ to-morrow week, and we could do it then; what do you say, Tabitha?”

“That will do very well,” answered the Dictator. “Of course it will be a great shock to their pride, but it is a real kindness to them to let them find their level here at once.”

“True charity,” echoed the Christian Skirmisher.

“And they never will, unless they are told it before all their friends,” said Miss Manby. “I hear he has actually been tampering with some of our pensioners at Reinsber—his niece paying them visits, and even giving them money.”

“We will remedy all this to-morrow week. Meanwhile, Letitia, it would not be amiss to let every one know our opinion of

these matters. You may even go so far as to intimate quietly, but firmly, that all persons who give the Oliphants any sanction will have no more favours from Us."

"I will just slip my blue bonnet on, and go my round this very afternoon, Miss Ayrville."

"There is one thing to be thought of," said the Heavy Dragoon. "When these Oliphants try to apologise or back out of it, must we still insist on people throwing them off?"

"Would not that be a little harsh?" Letitia ventured to put in. "You see, being new comers, they are possibly ignorant who are the natural leaders of society here. I should be rather inclined, myself, if they receive our expostulations meekly, and in a proper Christian spirit, to pass the thing over, and perhaps even—well, even to—but really I do not know."

"Perhaps even to ask them to tea?"

scoffed Miss Manby. "Really, child, what next? If they don't know who's who, we'll teach them, that's all."

"Our future conduct, Maria," said Tabitha, majestically, "had better be guided by future circumstances. For the present our course is clear. The Oliphants are to be put down on Wednesday, and the neighbourhood is to be given to understand that it must make its choice between them and ourselves."

"And there is not much doubt what that choice will be, I imagine," said Maria, laughing scornfully, and shaking the false curls thereby, like Olympian Zeus of yore.

Nor was poor Mr. Oliphant left utterly in ignorance of his threatened extinction. Two or three days afterwards, on his return from a long ramble on the hills with Kate (a mode of spending the fine summer-days to which they were very partial), he called at Sandy Topping, the residence of Dick

Wideawake, to inquire after a sick child. The house, a large plain building, stood high above the sea, with nothing but rocks, hills, and bleak moorland round it; and they found the farmer seated in the kitchen with Mr. Truman, near the big family clock, which, apparently with some forlorn notion of being in advance of the age, or stealing a march on Time, was always kept in these remote farmsteads an hour at least before Greenwich,—a circumstance that irritated Jabez extremely.

When the inquiries about the invalid had been made and answered, “My word, Mr. Oliphant,” said Dick, with the merriest of twinkles in his grey eyes, “but ye’re in for it now. Ye’ll hev to itt humble pie, or stand bar-foot ’i Cowd Showder Lane for ten year.”

“Why, what is the matter, Richard?”

“What, hevn’t ye heard? What, there’s Giant Grim, an’ Judge Hategood, an’ lile

Pickthank, the tell-tale, are ganging about aw ower telling folk at ye're nought, an' they munnot tak ony notice o' what ye do. I wadn't be ye for fifty pund."

"Giant Grim!"

"Ay, I was going to tell you about this myself, Mr. Oliphant, only I've been busy weeding," said the incumbent. "But he means—glad to hear you read your Bunyan, Dick; I quoted him on Easter Sunday, if you remember—Wideawake means Miss Ayrville and the rest of them."

"Oh, the old ladies, uncle, who behaved so badly to Dora, you know," laughed Kate. "Well, and what news of the three Saints of Stainton, Mr. Truman?"

"Why, it seems they have set their faces against this harmonium your uncle has been kind enough to give us, and they are turning everybody against you."

"What, for giving a harmonium to the church—absurd!" said Kate.

“It is not really that so much as what one may call your fishing in their waters. You see they always have everything their own way here, and they dislike changes.”

“Then they wish to have us cut by our neighbours?” said Mr. Oliphant.

“Exactly, if you don’t mend your ways.”

“I fear I am too old to mend mine, even at a lady’s dictation.”

“But I am dreadfully afraid, uncle, and vote for running away. Can you not give us shelter at Sandy Topping, Mr. Wide-awake, before this hurricane of spinsters comes on?”

“Nay but, Miss Oliphant,” answered Dick, much more seriously than he commonly spoke, “ye mustn’t blow ’em too leght. They’re nobbut milk ’at hes gaen sour wi’ standing, I knaw; but they’re tip-toppers at makking up a scandalous story, an’ aw t’ folk about, baith heigh an’ low, er flaid on ’em, an’ follow ’em like a

shudder o' staans i' a fence when ye stir a through. I wadn't cross 'em mair nor I could help, if I wor ye."

"Ah, I see I shall be beaten, but I do not mean to fall without a struggle. I shall show fight, I can tell you."

"Heigh," laughed Dick, "an' begow if ye give 'em a look as breght as that, ye'll wither 'em up clean. I niver seed sich lightning i' my born days; ye're evven-down dangerous."

"You are a sad flatterer, Mr. Wideawake; but I hope at any rate you will be on our side when all our friends cast us off."

"Ay, that I will;—but do tak care, and don't offend Giant Grim; ye're young yet, and don't knaw what they'll say o' ye."

"Wideawake is really quite right, Mr. Oliphant," said the parson; "I fear we shall all get into a sad scrape about this instrument, and other matters. Perhaps we

had better wait awhile before putting it in the church, and I think I'll send Miss Ayrville a few of my greendroppers. If I might give you a bit of advice, it is to be very deferential to these ladies when you meet. If you are, they'll come round in time, you'll see—they'll come round, never fear."

"Mr. Truman," answered Jabez, drawing himself up, and looking the other straight in the face, "you mean well, and I am obliged for your good intentions ; but for the future, when I am in want of your advice on matters personal to myself, perhaps you will allow me to ask for it before you give it. Good morning, sir. Come, Kate."

"Good morning, Mr. Wideawake ; and thank you very much for your hint about the giant, though you have frightened me so," said Miss Oliphant ; "and I hope you will come and see us sometimes in our soli-

tude when we are forsaken by a cruel world. You can slink in, you know, under pretext of teaching uncle some more Craven."

"Nay, nay, I'll hev nought to do wi' ye, Miss Oliphant; yan might as weel expect to git Penyghent intul a house wi'out being seen, as me: if I'se to come, ye'll hev to mak an undergrund passage aw t' way fra Sandy Topping to t' Haw."

"Good gracious," retorted Kate, "all the engineers in the country would not be able to make a tunnel big enough for you in our time."

On their way back they met with no incident worth recording, except that Jabez saw a man named Bowskill, who had been a quarryman at the limekilns till they stopped work, knock down a hare and pocket it. He was in one of Mr. Oliphant's fields at the time, and though Jabez was no sportsman, this open violation of the

laws excited his indignation so much, that, in spite of Kate's intercession, he brought the poacher before the magistrates, who sentenced him, in default of his paying the fine, to three months in the house of correction at Wakefield, and awarded the prosecutor the warmest thanks of the bench.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW SOCIETY.

BEING convinced, gentle reader, that everything connected with that noble Society for the Propagation of Virtue, which Mr. Oliphant had originated, is of the last importance to the human race, I have been at great pains to discover the Prospectus thereof, and by diligent research among the mass of papers at Reinsber Hall, was at last fortunate enough to meet with the original manuscript that had passed into the printer's hands. That nothing may be lost to posterity with regard to the early history of so striking an event, I give the document, as nearly as type will allow, in

the exact state in which I found it. Of the meetings and consultations which took place thereon between Fothergill, Truman, and Mr. Oliphant, the committee, no record whatever has been kept; but I find that though the prospectus itself is in Mr. Oliphant's own writing (who is doubtless responsible therefore for the rough draft of the regulations), the additions, here marked by brackets, and the corrections are in that of Fothergill, who seems in his usual way to have enjoyed introducing a little satire in disguise. With the simple character of one of his colleagues, the incumbent, he would have no difficulty; but how he overpersuaded the shrewd mind of Mr. Oliphant into agreeing to alterations so manifestly for the worse, I have always been at a loss to understand. However, here is the Prospectus.

Society for the Propagation of Virtue.

PRESIDENT.

JABEZ OLIPHANT, Esq.

VICE-PRESIDENT.

SIR GEORGE AUGUSTUS HIGHSIDE, Bart.

COMMITTEE.

Rev. JOSEPH TRUMAN.

H. HIGHSIDE, Esq.

W. FOTHERGILL, Esq.

The above Society has been formed for the purpose of inculcating and rewarding virtue in Reinsber.

With this object, the Committee propose to give PRIZES at the year-end to the most meritorious amongst the inhabitants who shall become members ; and the member who secures the greatest number of marks for such good and moral actions as are specified below, will receive the first prize.

The marks given are as follows :—

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. For each attendance at church on Sunday | . 5 |
| 2. For each attendance at church on week-days | . 10 |
| 3. For each attendance at church, if loss or inconvenience, such as spoiling of the member's hay, &c., has resulted therefrom, <i>additional</i> | . 1 |
| 4. For bows at the name of Jesus, each | . 4 |
| 5. For touching the cap, or making curtsies to a lady or gentleman, each time | . 2 4 |
| 6. For using the word "sir," or "madam," each time | . 2 4 |

7.	For offering a seat, or putting himself to any inconvenience through his politeness, each time	2	1
8.	For general godliness, per week	2	1
9.	For keeping the house clean, per week		1
10.	For every neatly mended patch on a coat or gown		1
11.	For each cold dinner eaten on a Sunday		5
12.	For each tract duly read		5

It must also be understood—

1st. That each member must make it his business to convert ~~others~~ *others*, and with this object must be instant “in season and out of season.” For each case of conversion ~~and~~ or introduction of another person to the Society an existing member will receive 5 marks.

2ndly. That a member is never to be [seen] drunk, or to swear, or play cards, or dance, or to walk out on Sunday [or in fact to do anything on that day]. For each offence he will forfeit 5 marks.

Applications for admission to be made to the President, J. Oliphant, Esq., Reinsber Hall.

CHAPTER X.

THE STORM BURSTS.

IF Shakespeare himself had occasion to wish for a muse of fire to sing aright the glories of Agincourt, how much more must the humble biographer of Mr. Oliphant need heavenly assistance when he attempts to describe the perils that now surrounded the unestablished throne of his great hero ! Inspire me, ye bright eyes of Reinsber ; for my hand trembles as I come to the fatal day when he must either contend at such odds against the united powers of Stainton, or, giving up all he holds dear, penitently ask forgiveness, happy if even so he may escape the utter annihilation to which they

destine him. However, muse or no muse, the effort must be made.

It was the evening, then, of the Carltons' tea-party and there was a large gathering : for with strangers to be publicly snubbed, who could decline an invitation ? There was assembled in the drawing-room therefore (start not, reader, as I whisper the awful name) all the great Slasher family from Stainton, the potent family that divided authority at that place even with the sisters three, though to power at Reinsber it cared not to aspire. Then there were the Earnecliffs of the Hill, and the Silverwoods of the Grove, the Highsides, the Mansfields, Fothergill, Truman, and a mixed multitude of spectators, all of name and mighty in their own domains. Of course too there were the Saints and Oliphants themselves.

Opinions were divided as to whether the latter would 'take their punishment'

quietly or not. Truman, Harry and the Slashers held that they would; Fothergill had his doubts. But no one doubted that if the Oliphants did resist they would be terribly beaten. As Harry Highside put the case, the betting was ten to one against the fight coming off, and, if it came off, the odds were a hundred to one on the Saints. The latter indeed, forgetting his gallantry in his acuteness, he offered to back to any amount, but he could find no 'takers,' except honest Dick Wideawake, who alone had the courage to venture half a sovereign on Kate.

And in truth most of us who wished to win would have laid our money against the Oliphants. For do but glance your eye over the room. The Fates, the Furies, and the Graces have each a representative there. See how calm confidence and irrepressible majesty sit on the virgin brow of the Dictator, who has taken the arm-chair of

honour, and is the centre of a crowd that trembles before the nodding of her awful head-dress of other days. Observe how the very footmen, as they hand her coffee, bow to her at least six inches lower than to any one else, how the gentlemen look solemn as they offer her a plate of toast, how all the company is silent as she delivers her oracles, how eagerly it listens, how loudly it applauds. See, too,—assured omen of victory—how there is fierce eagerness for the coming struggle, and scorn of opposition, and dauntless determination to do or die,—a whole line of bayonets, in fact—in that contemptuous eye of the Heavy Dragoon, and how the crisp curls wave more menacingly than ever as she laughs out her disdain and malice to her neighbours. Even the simper on Letitia's ever-rosy cheek is sweeter than usual, as if she thinks a walk over the field after the victory will be a very pleasant thing. She

is splendidly got up, but it certainly is a pity (as Fothergill whispers to Harry) that she shows so much of her bare shoulders unless they were better covered with flesh. On the same side, there is the prestige of thirty years' leadership, the friendship of many of the company, and the terror of the rest. And who are their antagonists? The old man yonder, sitting thoughtful and neglected in a corner, and this girl, who is either unconscious of her danger or is more probably disguising her fright by pretending to talk with a good deal of animation—two very weak victims indeed, considering that they are alone among strangers. Surely, ye Saints, as ye merit that name and have the power, ye will be merciful.

There was even disaffection in the camp of the Oliphants themselves; for Mrs. Oliphant had heard something about the coming storm, and advised staying away from the

party, but her infatuated connections absolutely refused to do so. She went herself therefore in the hope of conciliating the old ladies by tact and humility ; but during tea she often wished she had not come, for she found herself, like Jabez and Miss Oliphant, treated with reserve by almost all the company. Many of the latter of course scarcely knew the Oliphants, and more were positively afraid to notice them under those prying eyes of the old maids. Fothergill, indeed, chatted manfully with Mr. Oliphant ; but when he afterwards approached Miss Ayrville to take her empty tea-cup, the Dictator gave him her most chilling “ No thank you, sir,” instead.

And now that the tea-things are cleared away there is a lull in the conversation. Mrs. Carlton, anxious to prevent any unpleasantness in her house, bustles up to the arm-chair and deferentially hopes Miss Ayrville will join in a rubber. But that

lady has seen her opportunity, and will not miss it.

“Whist, Mrs. Carlton?” she says, with deliberate disdain: “certainly—by-and-by. But just at present we have a little duty to perform. Mr. Truman!” and as that gentleman was in the farthest corner she had to raise her voice to make him hear. Silence fell on the company, for every one felt that the engagement was beginning.

“Mr. Truman—sit still, sir; I have nothing to say which every one in the room may not hear—what is this strange report about a harmonium for the church? Can it be true, sir?”

“Why, yes, Miss Ayrville,” answered Truman, quaking between fear of losing his present and incensing the Dictator; “yes, I am afraid it is—that is—I mean—that Mr. Oliphant here” (Jabez was sitting next him, which made the business still more awkward) “has munificently offered us one.”

Then not knowing what else to say, he blundered on : " This is Mr. Oliphant, Miss Ayrville ; I don't think you know him."

" Indeed !" said the venerable dame, severely, giving at the same time the slightest glance she possibly could in the direction of Jabez, and the stiffest bob of her majestic head. Mr. Oliphant responded with a bow more courteous but quite as stately, while the Dictator turned to the hostess and continued in a lower voice, but one evidently intended to be audible over the room, " What a pity it is, Mrs. Carlton, that poor Mr. Truman will persist in introducing persons who live in the same neighbourhood : if we had wished to know these people, we should have called on them."

The parson blushed, and half a second's awful pause followed. Kate broke it suddenly :

" Who is that droll old gentleman in the corner, Mr. Slasher—the one who has just

been talking? Ah, it is a lady, I see," she said, speaking herself also in an undertone, but loud enough to be heard by Miss Ayrville and every one, for Mr. Slasher was three or four chairs off.

That gentleman, with several others, was nearly choking with subdued laughter as he saw the whiteness that came over the elderly lady's face at Kate's pretended ignorance. It would perhaps have been wiser to pass by the observation as it was addressed to another person, but Miss Ayrville was too angry to do so.

"Your friend, Mr. Slasher," she said, "can have moved but little in our society if she is not acquainted with me; and she will allow me to say that this is not the way to get into it."

"I am very sorry for that, Miss Ayrville, —since that is your name, Mr. Slasher tells me," replied Kate, looking at the old lady with a quiet smile: "but, in the society in

which we have hitherto moved, people do not treat strangers with insolence, and do not listen to private remarks.”

Miss Ayrville's face grew white again, but as she had no answer ready, she only shrugged her shoulders contemptuously and turned to the parson.

“To resume the subject, Mr. Truman, I must tell you that the introduction of this instrument will cause the greatest dissatisfaction to us all—dissension it will not cause; for we are all of one mind on the question.”

Joseph was struggling hard to find an apology, when Mr. Oliphant, who had been winding himself up for a speech, began striking as suddenly and grandly as the clock at Westminster.

“Courtesy compels me to say, madam, that I am somewhat sorry if any act of mine has unintentionally caused you annoyance; but to expect that I shall yield in this

matter or any other in which I conceive myself right, is to expect me to do what I have never done yet, and what at my age I do not intend to begin doing. All argument, all authority, all reason are on the side of the introduction of music into churches. If by the aid of his wonderful lyre, Orpheus could move stones——”

“ We have never heard of Mr. Orpheus here, sir,” burst in Miss Manby, who had been burning to second the Dictator, and could no longer restrain her impatience : “ and what has a pack of things about your great city-people and liars and so on to do with this harmonium business ? You must talk plainly here, sir, if you want us to know what you mean : we are simple, plain people, and——”

“ Remarkably plain, Mr. Slasher—do you not think so ?” said Kate with a sly look at the great red face : and the titter which the Heavy Dragoon’s pardonable blunder

had occasioned, grew into an absolute laugh all round the room.

Miss Manby stopped suddenly, like a fierce bull checked in mid career by the lance of the picador—and turned the Gorgon head with its flashing eyes and all its threatening curls full on Miss Oliphant as if to petrify her. Apparently however the survey of Kate's smiling face was unsatisfactory, for with a voice still rougher than before she returned to her charge on the uncle.

“ You talk about argument and authority, sir ; well, we don't care about arguments at Reinsber and we want no authority but our own. You have come here a mere stranger, occupying the place of better people than yourself, and you think of turning Reinsber topsy-turvy because you have got rich ; you'll find yourself very much mistaken.”

“ I do not quite see, madam, how introducing a harmonium into the church is

turning Reinsber topsy-turvy, as you call it," replied Jabez with cold courtesy ; " but if I find anything wrong in the village I shall certainly do my best to set it right."

" Oh yes, and you'll introduce paintings next, and incense and stained glass windows, and all kinds of Popish things, won't you ?"

" I am a Low Churchman myself, madam, and therefore unlikely to go so far as you say, but you certainly remind me of one thing I had nearly forgotten—I think, Mr. Truman, as this good lady says, the church does look very bare, and with your permission, I shall put up a stained glass window in memory of my father."

The looks of indignation and astonishment which the Saints exchanged may be imagined.

" What, sir—THE COBBLER ?" Miss Manby exclaimed, furiously.

The observation was a rude one, even for

the Heavy Dragoon ; but Mr. Oliphant met her eye without flinching.

“Yes, madam, the cobbler,” he answered quietly but proudly. “I am not ashamed of my worthy father ; and I may perhaps say that not many cobblers have sons who are able to erect windows in their honour.”

“By Jove, no,” exclaimed Sir George Highside, whose ancient blood, sluggish as it was, was stirred by the coarseness of Miss Manby’s remark : “you are right there, Oliphant. And perhaps it is not many sons either that would care to erect them,” he added sadly, with a glance towards Harry.

Letitia felt that she was in duty bound to strike a blow for the good cause ; for the battle seemed going sadly against the triumvirate.

“Oh dear, Sir George,” she whimpered out, “I do hope I shall never live to see

such a thing—such a—such a desecration, Sir George.”

“ Well, poor old body, I fear it is scarcely likely she will : what can one expect at seventy ? ” whispered Kate sympathetically, but audibly, and it was observed that Letitia did not speak again all the night.

Miss Ayrville, who had been watching with a general's eye the not very brilliant success of her armaments, now resolved to end the contest by a decisive blow. She drew herself up for it.

“ Mr. Truman, it is evidently useless to pursue the subject,” she said in awful tones ; “ but I think it right to tell you that if this harmonium is placed in the church, Miss Manby, Miss Beecroft and myself have fully decided on giving up our pews. We shall not enter Reinsber church again.”

Now, in that old-fashioned place of worship, the ladies occupied pews as large as small rooms, and covered, by way of dis-

tion rather than ornament, with green baize and brass nails. The sittings were relics of the time when it was thought proper to give emphasis to rank even in the house of God : hence they were placed immediately in front of the communion rails, and were higher by two steps than the narrow pens of varnished deal which were considered good enough for the rest of the flock. There then, every Sunday morning, the old ladies might be seen, each in the ample space of her own pew, and towering in solitary grandeur over the plebeians below. The only other pew on the same level was that belonging to the Hall, and occupied, of course, by the Oliphants.

When the important determination was announced, Jabez for the first time was posed. The parson, too, was evidently wavering on account of the hole which such a defalcation would make in his scanty pit-

tance, drawn almost entirely from the pews. Kate, however, met the difficulty by saying to her uncle across the room :

“That would do very nicely, uncle, would it not? I think you were telling me the other day that we wanted two or three pews for the servants; so if these ladies give up theirs, perhaps Mr. Truman would let us have them for that purpose.”

“Certainly, certainly,” said Jabez, greatly relieved; “I shall be obliged if you will, Mr. Truman.”

Kate had spoken very quietly, but her audacious proposition caused a succession of sly looks among all in the company who could see a joke; and a great joke most of them thought it would be to have the Hall domestics filling that conspicuous position in church of which the Saints, if the fact should be mentioned, were known to be somewhat proud. But to the three ladies the notion was intolerable. It was all that

even the Dictator could do to speak calmly as she said—

“Well—perhaps, Mr. Truman—well, we have not quite come to a final decision about our pews : when we have we will let you know.”

Then, at last, with the appearance of a grim Indian warrior who has fallen into the hands of his enemies, but is resolved to bear the torture without a groan, she permitted herself to be led off to the whist table. The great battle, for which the Saints were so anxious, had not only come off, but to everybody's astonishment it was perfectly clear that they had lost it.

Although, however, the general engagement was over, and the Dictator and Letitia had retired sullenly to three-penny points for the night, Miss Manby, fierce and obstinate even in defeat, resolved to have a passage of arms on her own account with that “insolent minx,” Kate Oliphant, at a later

period of the evening. As she did not wish the young lady's humiliation to be a private one, she chose her time when Dora and Kate were the centre of a group, and she thought it best to strike at Miss Oliphant through her friend.

"Well, Dora," she said, seating herself on a chair by Miss Mansfield, and smiling affectionately—they were hideous things those smiles of the Heavy Dragoon—"well, Dora, I suppose we must all congratulate you on your appointment."

"My appointment, Miss Manby?"

"Perhaps I have been misinformed, but they had it in the village that you were appointed to play this dreadful new instrument which makes such a noise already."

"Ah, the harmonium," replied Dora smiling; "yes, Mr. Truman is kind enough to say that I may play it if I like."

"Well, of course it is not what we, your old friends, should have liked for you, but

you and your mother know best, and, in your altered circumstances, no doubt the salary will be very useful."

"The salary, Miss Manby! What do you mean?" asked Dora, with tears in her eyes, and quivering at the insult.

"Oh, I beg pardon; you are not to be paid, then?—well, perhaps that is better. But you should not excite yourself so much, you silly girl; you are not to blame for what has happened, and if you get so much excited, you'll be playing badly in church, you know," and she tapped the poor girl's shoulder playfully with her fan, in a sort of ogish attempt at jocularity.

Hitherto Kate had never lost her temper, and throughout had spoken gently and even good-humouredly; but this gratuitous insult to the unoffending little dove at her side made her vehemently angry, and her eyes were flashing with some of the light-

ning Dick Wideawake observed in them, as she said :

“ Well, Dora, if you do give us a false note sometimes, at any rate I hope you will never show a false front to your friends.”

She had addressed Dora, but she looked full at the waving curls of the Heavy Dragoon, and it was the latter's turn to be angry now, for a low laugh was running like wildfire round the group of listeners.

“ I thought, Miss Oliphant,” she said with a bitter sarcastic laugh, “ your maxim was not to listen to private remarks.”

It was a blunder in tactics to use Kate's name, and the latter replied coolly :

“ Really, madam, you have the advantage of me.”

“ Gad, then, it's for the first time to-night,” whispered Harry to his next neighbour. Kate heard the remark and smiled, but continued :

“ But as to my maxim, it served its pur-

pose, and if I now discard it when it is no longer useful, that is not so bad as discarding a friend under the same circumstances."

"Who does discard their friends?" asked Miss Manby, blazing into anger; but Kate, as if disdaining to continue the conversation with her, addressed Fothergill.

"I have just thought of an amusing character for a play, Mr. Fothergill," she said; "a malicious old toady, who repays herself for her flattery to the rich, by insulting them when they become poor. With admirable consistency she should never forgive either her former friends for being obliged to sell the house where she had eaten so many dinners or the innocent new-comers for taking it. I would make her a coarse, vulgar, blustering woman, country-bred, and of the very lowest extraction, yet so old, that she had quite forgotten the circumstance, and thought her-

self at liberty to twit others with their parentage. She should aspire to be a leader of *ton* without knowing the meaning of the word, a model Christian without charity, and——There, Dora, I thought I would make her vacate that chair before long,” Kate whispered with a laugh, as the Heavy Dragoon beat a hasty retreat: “see, she has left her work-bag behind her, and I think I might fairly claim it as spoils of war; but please give it to her, Mr. Fothergill, and ask her if she will not come back and hear the rest of the discourse.” But William delivered the bag and not the message.

Before the company broke up, Miss Oliphant had pleased the elderly part of it by her kindly feeling, and delighted the younger by promising them a picnic and dance afterwards. Next day, Harry paid his five sovereigns like a man to Dick Wideawake with the comment that, “he’d

have given the money twice over to see the fun," and within twenty-four hours all Reinsber knew what had been said and done on the previous evening. It was the end of the Saints' influence in the village ; for their authority, arising from self-assumption on the one side, and fear on the other, only required disputing to be overthrown, and the richer people about began to think that the Oliphants would be pleasanter acquaintance than the sisterhood. Like a skilful general, too, Mr. Oliphant followed up his victory by raising from his own purse Mr. Truman's miserable stipend to one hundred and fifty pounds a year, and by sundry acts of munificence to the charitable institutions of the district ; while the neighbouring squires were so delighted with his conduct about the poacher, that on their unanimous recommendation he was placed on the Commission—all which circumstances increased

both his popularity and importance. As to the poor, even Miss Ayrville's pensioners found they could get double rations at the Hall, and played their cards accordingly. With this class, the way of giving relief also turned out to be important, for one of them contrasted the visits of Miss Manby and Miss Oliphant as follows : " When owd Miss Manby comes to see us she looks as glum an' as sour at us as if we'd stolen some'at, an' she sits lecturing us on wer wickedness—though that's aw varra weel belike—but then she will knaw how t' hoil i' t' childer's pinafore com about, and what we've done wi' t' last sixpence she gev us, and if we can't tell her to a penny, shoo's as sharp as sharp : but Miss Oliphant axes efter granny an' t' childer i' sich a kind pleasant way, 'at ye feel ye've a reght good friend in her, an' ye tell her aw yer lile troubles an' iverything." In the rustic opinion, then, Mr. Oliphant's niece had

something to do with the declining influence of the Saints ; and as for Fothergill and Highside, they swore henceforth that there was no one in Reinsber worthy to cross swords with that redoubtable knight, Sir Kate Oliphant. Jabez on the other hand thought to his dying day that the great victory and its consequences were entirely due to his own firmness and eloquent oration, however much the effect of the latter had been marred by interruption.

Between these conflicting opinions I shall not pretend to decide, but having now traced the commencement of my hero's reign till we have seen him fairly seated on the throne of Reinsber in undisputed supremacy, and having moreover indicated some of the great measures of internal policy which were to make his reign glorious, with the reader's leave I will draw breath awhile before proceeding farther.

BOOK II.

MR. OLIPHANT'S POWER AT ITS HEIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

AN ARRIVAL.

“**W**HEN is this young man coming, Mr. Oliphant?”

“The day after to-morrow: that will be the first of July, I believe. He must have a room with a north aspect as a studio, for he will no doubt wish to have much of his time to himself.”

“Certainly, it would be better,” replied Mrs. Oliphant. “One would not like to have him always hanging about, and coming across the family. The little back room on

he third storey will be just the thing. I suppose he could dine with the house-keeper ; it would save the trouble of dish-ing up his meals separately."

"He will of course take his meals with the family, unless he prefers them by him-self."

"With us, Mr. Oliphant? Why, I thought you said he was of the very lowest origin, brought up at a charity school?"

"And what was I myself, originally?" said Jabez.

"Yes, but that is very different, you know," answered the other, testily. "When the young man has become as rich as you are, I am sure no one will object to receiving him at table, whatever he is."

"It has always been one of the highest privileges of wealth to extend its patron-age to deserving young artists. Mr. Hol-den's profession is one of great dignity, and its claims must be recognised."

“But do consider, Mr. Oliphant, how much he will be thrown with us and Kate.”

“No doubt, he will necessarily be a good deal with us, and more with Kate; otherwise he would not be of much use to her,” answered Jabez.

“Oh, yes, that is all very well; but I do hope his manners are passable; it will be very disagreeable if they are not, with the Highsides and others coming here so much.”

“Mr. Holden is a most praiseworthy young man, Mrs. Oliphant, who is raising himself to eminence entirely by his own exertions, except for such encouragement as persons like ourselves can give him. He has travelled a good deal, and his manners, for an almost self-educated man of his age, are above par; that is,” correcting himself, “gentlemanly, in fact. Can you suppose I should wish him to teach my niece if they

had been otherwise ? I think you will be able to make all the necessary arrangements now, and I am very busy this morning."

So Jabez turned to the mass of state papers before him, and his sister-in-law went away in dudgeon. But it was some slight satisfaction to her that she contrived to give their visitor one of the worst bed-rooms in the house.

The artist arrived on the day named. He had been engaged by Mr. Oliphant to give lessons in painting to Kate, who was fond of water-colours. He was about twenty-four, with a pleasant, open face that bore no marks of the hard work and cares through which he had passed ; for it was the nature of the man to look always at the sunny side, and—hence perhaps—though he was an aspiring enthusiast, his enthusiasm was of that kind which stops

short of the stake. Such, no doubt, is not the temper of the highest order of creative minds, but it was Frank Holden's.

"I am very anxious, Mr. Holden," said Jabez, in the course of the evening, "to raise our farmers and labourers, both morally and intellectually, and I have already told you by what means I intend to improve their morals" (Mr. Oliphant tapped significantly a goodly bundle of papers which lay on the table, and which were nothing less than prospectuses of the S. P. V., fresh from the printer's hands); "but with regard to their intellectual advancement, I should like your opinion. They are mere savages now in all that relates to the beautiful or the sublime: how can we give them a taste for these?"

"It seems to me," replied Holden, modestly, "that you must give them a good education first. An Englishman's head produces facts and steam-engines

without forcing; but his brains must be well manured to yield poetry."

"My own theory is that we should do it by simply placing constantly before the man some good works of art. By feasting his eyes on these night and day—living with them in fact—his soul will gradually come to be in harmony with them, and his whole nature be refined and purified."

"Just as mad-doctors often become mad themselves," said Fothergill, who had been invited to meet the artist.

"But until a man appreciates nature itself," objected Holden, "he will scarcely admire a painting of it. You would be expecting him to like a very poor copy (for the best work of art is no more) when he does not care for the matchless original."

"I am not at all offended at your candour, Mr. Holden," replied Jabez, "but I do not give up my opinion. Would you oblige me by dashing off a few rough paint-

ings of the scenery here? I think it is better to begin by showing my neighbours the beauty of objects they have long been familiar with. We will distribute these sketches among the cottages where there are large families, since the young are naturally more susceptible."

Holden said he would be happy to do his best, and Fothergill remarked with a sly smile :

"You are at all events acting up to the advice of the great Italian, I believe, Mr. Oliphant. Ah, here it is" (taking down the 'Prince' from Mr. Oliphant's well-stocked bookshelves). "'Princes,' and of course all men of influence, 'ought to honour talents and protect the arts.' Hum, the next is not so appropriate, but how true it is! 'They should honour with their presence the different trading companies and corporations, and display on such occasions the greatest affability and facility of

access, always remembering to support their station with becoming dignity, which should never be lost sight of under any circumstances.’”

“Admirable! I am obliged to you for reminding me of the passage,” said Jabez, never dreaming that the description was intended as a sarcastic commentary on his own manner.

“You like Machiavelli, then, Mr. Fothergill?” Holden asked.

“Oh, the Prince is the king of all books, though people do talk of the republic of letters,” answered Fothergill.

“His style no doubt is wonderful, so clear, yet so condensed,” said Jabez. “It is like that of the old Greeks; and a page of theirs often contains as much thought as a modern volume. You see I have kept up my classics, Mr. Holden.”

“Well,” said the artist, “modern authors, with their fifty volumes apiece, must surely

think that Time is the captain of a Great Eastern, with unlimited capacity for the stowage of heavy lumber ; whereas he sails, I take it, in a very small boat, and allows no luggage whatever, except what you can carry in your breast-pocket, while you are extremely lucky if you can get a passage to posterity even so."

"Pooh, man, our authors don't write for posterity, but the publishers," growled Fothergill. "They are wise enough to prefer a note of the Bank of England to any number of notes of admiration in future ages."

"Not our best writers, surely," returned Holden, smiling. "But as to Machiavelli, I confess he repels me because he founds his theory of government on policy, and not on straightforwardness."

"Policy is very necessary sometimes," answered Fothergill. "Do you not think so, Mrs. Oliphant?"

The latter assented, but Holden exclaimed :

“It would be a wretched world if such duplicity as Machiavelli advocates were necessary.”

“And is it not a wretched world? I know I often wish I were a tailor.”

“Why a tailor, Mr. Fothergill?”

“Why, because I should then be only the ninth part of a man, and have as little of this vile humanity as possible.”

“Well, I’ve been more fortunate in my experiences of mankind than you seem to have been. I have found them, on the whole, tolerably kind-hearted and well-meaning, and doing wrong oftener through mistake than from malice.”

Fothergill looked at the good-natured young artist from beneath his shaggy eyebrows with a sort of rough pity and kindness.

“My dear sir, you are evidently not a

native of England, but Utopia," he said, gently.

"And I'd rather live on in Utopia," retorted Frank, with a laugh, "than be dragged out of it into a world such as yours."

"But my world is the real one. Take your case of statesmen. Well, it is one of the sublime but incomprehensible necessities of the universe that ministers should wriggle to their object like worms, instead of walking to it straight and in the upright posture like men. If they went straight-forward, they would be thought fools, and the fatality of fools would attend them. They must crawl. They have always governed the world by crawling, and they always will."

"And so you think it all very proper that they should expend as much brain as would almost have written the Proverbs of Solomon in tricking another state out of a

miserable island not worth twopence, or undermining a rival politician !”

“ I did not say it is right ; I said it is the fact, and I am sorry it is, but I cannot help it,” Fothergill replied.

“ Excuse me, you said it is a necessity of the universe. Now, I hold that honesty is the best policy, even for states.”

“ It may be so—when the millennium arrives,” answered Fothergill.

“ Then the millennium is at hand, for I believe there is a time coming when even statesmen will dare to walk straight and speak out, because they will desire nothing but what is just. Even now, the most popular statesmen are those who, like Gladstone and Lord Stanley, marshal their great abilities under the command of conscience alone, fight only in broad daylight, and never lent themselves to a trick in their lives. These are the men of whom, more than of a dozen wily Talleyrands, a nation

has reason to be proud. And we are proud of them : we do them some justice ; history will do them more."

" History ! Why, that's falser than the politicians. It's the long lane that never has a turning into truth from one end to the other."

The argument between the young men ended, of course, by each disputant being strengthened in his own opinion. Jabez and Kate, who had been watching with amusement the earnestness displayed on one side, and the scepticism on the other, were disposed to agree with Frank ; but Mrs. Oliphant was very strongly on the side of Fothergill. The interest, however, with which the artist had entered into the dispute did not make him forget his promise to Mr. Oliphant, and in a short time he dashed off a few landscapes such as that gentleman wished for. These were duly distributed, and Mr. Oliphant's en-

thusiasm did not stop even here, for he gave a couple of paintings, which he had bought for twenty pounds each at the Academy, to householders who had six or seven children apiece.

A fortnight afterwards he started with Frank on a tour of inspection, not so much with the hope of any great result being developed as yet in the minds of the Reinsber carles, as to see how they liked and had hung the pictures.

“Good-morning, Mrs. Hargraves,” he said, when he came to the first cottage where one of the landscapes was deposited; “and how do you like your painting? May we come in?”

“Surely, surely, Mr. Oliphant,” replied the woman, dropping a curtsy, and dusting a couple of chairs with her apron; “an’ I’se sure we’re mich obleeged to ye for it. Aa, man, but it’s fearful fine; our John’s sat mony an hour glowring at it as ye teld

him to do. We clapped it a' top o' t' dresser, to be safe. See !"

The painting was one of the Reinsber valley in winter, when the ground was covered with snow, above which only the grey limestone crags, with a few bare trees, were visible. It had no frame, being simply mounted on stiff card-board ; and Frank nearly went into a fit with endeavours to hide his laughter, when he saw that the picture was placed with the bottom uppermost.

"See !" repeated the good dame, proudly. "My man thinks thor clouds are some'at wonderful" (she put her thick red forefinger on the limestone rocks) ; "but, though he's scratted his topping mony a time ower it, he can't reghtly mak out what that blue at t' boddom can stand for, unless it's t' sea. This I mean, Mr. Oliphant," and she pointed to what was meant for a bright frosty sky.

Jabez groaned in spirit.

“I think we must try them with figure-sketches, Mr. Holden : landscape is perhaps at present just a little beyond their powers of appreciation. That will do, my good woman, that will do—thank you,” and Mr. Oliphant resumed his hat and gloves in great haste ; but Frank kindly explained to Mrs. Hargraves her mistake, and put the picture right.

On visiting the rest of the cottages, they found that one of Frank’s water-colours had acquired a good many additional touches by being thrown down among the ashes ; and another had been carefully wrapped up in paper, and stowed away, “to keep it out of the dust.” The fate of the two oil-paintings, however, had been even more disastrous, for in one the boys had discovered a church-tower, which formed an admirable mark for their arrows ; and the other, within a few days after Mr.

Oliphant gave it, had been sold by its new possessor to a wandering pedlar, who was struck with the gorgeousness of its frame.

“Why, ye see,” said the prudent carle, when summoned to defend such an outrageous piece of conduct, “he offered me ten shilling for it, an’ I thowt I’d better be doing. Begow, ten shilling isn’t mich to ye, happen, but it’s a mint o’ money to sich as mysel, Mr. Oliphant. It wor a first-rate bargain, *I* thowt.”

Jabez was very properly indignant at the last fellow, and never gave him the light of his countenance again. But he did not altogether abandon his own method of developing a taste for art, and, as the most appropriate thing he could think of, presented to the village a large plaster cast of Hercules resting on his club after cleansing the Augean stables. This was placed in the centre of the green, and was certainly attractive even to the simple rustics ; for

every evening at least a dozen might be seen clustered round it with their pipes. To be sure, they generally turned their backs on it, getting support rather than inspiration from it ; and on one occasion some urchins were rude enough to place a clay pipe between the lips of Hercules. But Mr. Oliphant wisely trusted to time ; on which he was also forced to rely for the success of his new society, for at present almost the only members, besides the committee, were Tommy Doolittle the grocer, a meek and good Sunday-school teacher named Brown, and half-a-dozen blind and bedridden old women. In fact, it went already by a bad name in the village, being irreverently dubbed "The Cold Mutton Club," because, forsooth, cold dinners on Sundays were so strongly insisted on in the prospectus.

CHAPTER II.

MAN PROPOSES, BUT GOD DISPOSES.

THREE months had gone by, and Fothergill was growing more bitter and sarcastic every day. He had no appetite ; he could not sleep ; he could do nothing but think of Kate Oliphant, in spite of the wise resolution he had previously made about her. He was afraid, too, that he had a rival in the artist, and, by the hints and insinuations he had thrown out one night over a pipe, had succeeded in making Holden examine more closely the state of his feelings towards his pupil. Of Harry Highside William was even more jealous, for, by a little of Mrs. Oliphant's admirable management, the embryo baronet

was Kate's constant escort on riding expeditions, and had shown of late a marked improvement in politeness.

Fothergill determined, therefore, to take the very first opportunity of declaring himself, and thought he could find one during a picnic which the Oliphants gave in October. It was an excursion to a waterfall among the hills, and the party, which was a large one, after being conveyed in carriages as far as the road served, had then to go on foot through the pastures for the remaining three miles. Before they had walked far, William found his way to the side of Miss Oliphant, who was with Highside and one of the Miss Carltons.

"Her Majesty's own weather," he said, in his usual bantering tone, as he came up.

"And has not her Majesty's prince of grumblers something to object to in it?" asked Kate. "Might not the sun's fires have a little fresh coal put to them with

advantage, or the leaves of yon beech-trees some brighter colour from Mr. Holden's paint-box?"

"A nice mess he would make of them! —paint them wrong side up, very likely, as Betty Hargraves says he did with the Reinsber valley. But I do wish the ground" (glancing down) "would grow Turkey carpets instead of wet grass."

"Ah, that would be nice!" said Miss Carlton.

"Well, I knew there would be something wrong," said Kate, "and even if you got your marvellous footpath, Mr. Fothergill, you would not be content with it unless there was a bush growing cigars by its side."

"And a pretty hand popping up to give one a light when required."

"And fairy music underneath, to make the distance seem shorter."

"Yes, and sofas here and there, to sit down on when one was tired."

"And the beautiful landscapes all fore-

shortened from nature, that you might see them without trouble—and a hundred other things, Mr. Fothergill—and after all you would say it did not quite lead where you wished to go,” said Kate.

“Ah, no ; I would have it between Reinsber and the Hall,” he replied.

“And get tired of using it in a week. I believe you and Mr. Truman yonder think more about getting your miserable feet damp than about this terrible railway accident which we were just discussing.”

“And very reasonably, unless one had happened to be in the train,” Fothergill retorted. “The damp feet affect one’s self, the accident only affects other people. In what possible way can it concern me that Smith, Brown, and Robinson are killed by a goods train running into them ? They are only names to me, and I never did feel any interest in names. Besides, I know there will be plenty more Smiths, Browns, and Robinsons to fill up their place. I

should consider it a gross affectation even to say I was sorry."

"O Mr. Fothergill ! How can you expect any one to feel sympathy for yourself, when you have none for others ?" asked Miss Carlton.

"I expect sympathy only where I give it—in the case of my friends, who are few enough," he said. "As to the condolence and pocket-handkerchiefs of the outside multitude, I should scorn them. I say, Highside, you are pushing Miss Oliphant and me off the path. Don't you see how much narrower it is ? Just show us a bit of this new politeness of yours, old fellow" (with a queer side-glance at Miss Oliphant), "and move on a little in advance."

Harry looked fierce, as if he thought himself supplanted, but was obliged, from mere civility, to beg pardon and move on with Miss Carlton, leaving Kate and William to bring up the rear.

“You have tamed our young savage wonderfully,” said Fothergill. “What infinite trouble he must have cost you!”

“Mr. Highside is of a teachable nature, very unlike some persons,” laughed Kate.

“Well, you’ll have to pay the puppy-tax on him the next time the collector comes round. He is as much your property as your horse.”

“Now, Mr. Fothergill, I will not have you abusing him. He is a very kind-hearted young fellow, a splendid rider, and I never thought till lately there was a thousandth part of the good in him which there is.”

“Really! What discoveries travellers do make when they are the first to set foot in a country! By the way, is not that a new fern? Let me get it for you.”

He sprang a few yards up the bank, and plucked something while Miss Oliphant waited below. He threw the plant away,

however, immediately, exclaiming, "It is only a common one, after all," and rejoined her. But by the delay he had placed thirty or forty yards between Harry and themselves.

"It is strange that I should be so much mistaken," he said.

"Surely there are stranger things in the world than that," retorted Kate.

"Oh, the strangeness of things depends so much on the point of view. For instance, I think it strange, as I was saying, that you should stroke Harry Highside so much, and you think it strange, I dare say, that all the world, including him and myself, is so desperately in love with you."

He had often got nearly as far as this before, speaking jestingly as now, and Kate answered in the same way :

"The world must be sillier, then, than I thought it. And as for you, Mr. Fothergill, I had always fancied you admired an-

other person too much ever to fall in love with me."

"Another person!"

"Yourself, to be sure. Is not the impeachment true?"

"By heaven, you wrong me, Miss Oliphant, but I hope and trust you were only in jest."

"Why, you did not think I meant it, surely? I am very sorry," answered Kate, struck with the other's changed tone.

"Thank you for that, at any rate," he said in an earnest voice. "But I am not in jest myself. Kate!" (taking her hand) "since the first day I met you in London I have admired you, and that admiration has at last become irresistible, till I can find nothing in the world so beautiful and complete as yourself. I will not come to you with a lie on my tongue, Kate. I will not pay the cleverest girl I know the poor compliment of swearing that if she won't have me, I

shall die. No ; but if you value the affection of one who can appreciate you, and who loves you very heartily, here it is for you. It is rather too dirty to do the proper thing and kneel, isn't it?" he added, quite unable to resist a joke even then. "Say that you will try to love me, Kate!" And he again took the trembling little hand which she had withdrawn.

"Nay, Mr. Fothergill," replied Kate gently and very sadly. "I cannot say so. I ought to have stopped you before—before you spoke so much. I am very sorry for all this ; but it cannot be."

"And yet you pity me ; and they say pity is akin to love. Why cannot it be?"

"I do not love you so."

"But you may. Let me try to win this great prize of your affection ; let it be an object to me to live for, let years of devotion——"

"No, Mr. Fothergill. You will, I trust,

find some one a thousand times worthier than myself of all these efforts, and I respect you from my heart ; but love you—in that way—I do not, and, I am certain, never can.”

“Indeed ! And why cannot you love me ?” said Fothergill, proudly. “You will at least tell me what is this insurmountable barrier that divides us ?”

“Is it not enough to say that my answer is final ?” she asked, pleadingly, and turning to him with tears in her eyes. “If, without thinking, I spoke rather hastily, indeed, indeed I did not mean to be unkind. It was only to end the sooner what you must now feel, dear Mr. Fothergill, to be the least pleasant episode in our friendship.”

“It is at least due to me, Miss Oliphant, to give your reason for so decisive an avowal.”

“Nay, I will not, cannot pain you un-

necessarily. Have we not said enough about all this?"

"It is your fortune, I suppose. I ought to have been a stupid cow-gazing baronet, or a millionaire."

"No, Mr. Fothergill," said Kate, with dignity; "I count my money only as the dirt beneath our feet in talking of such things as these. But I may be mistaken—I may misjudge you—and I scarcely know how to put my reasons; but, if I must speak, I think they are that you seem to be sceptical just where I am reverential. You worship nothing but intellect without heart; so you trust nobody, cannot believe in virtue, ridicule enthusiasm—in one word, you only count the clock when it strikes wrong."

"You are as fond of satire as I am, Miss Oliphant."

"Possibly: but you satirise to destroy, I to reform; and I spare the weak and

the good. I am not quite Christian enough to spare my enemies, but I do spare, and would die for my friends. If your arrows are sharp, you do not care whether it is justice or injustice that shoots them."

"In other words," answered Fothergill, haughtily, "I am a little gibing Mephistopheles, or at best a catchpenny fool, who sees nothing in life but a jest, and nothing in eternity but the chance of a pun. It may be so, but I did not know it."

"Nay, nay; you are naturally noble, and you have kept your head clear enough; but—forgive me, dear Mr. Fothergill—your heart has got cased over somehow. Once remove the casing, and I believe the heart is still there as kind and generous as ever."

"I believe you are right," murmured Fothergill. "I had high aspirations and generous impulses once. You are right,

Kate; but oh, if you would help me to remove the casings! I could succeed in anything with you at my side, and I will try hard to be worthier of you than I am."

"Once more, Mr. Fothergill, it cannot be. You require a gentler hand than my own: yes, and the hand of one you love better than you would ever love me."

"That is hardly possible, Miss Oliphant."

"Oh, yes. You will find some affectionate girl in whom you can trust perfectly; and when you see there really is one good person in the world, you will begin to look for more. Your love for me is a feeble, unreal thing—not such as would ever do you good or satisfy me."

"I love you as well as I shall ever love any one."

"You think so now, I am sure; but you will find out your mistake some time. For myself—I am rather romantic, I suppose—

but I must have the love of one who would not merely kneel in the dirt for me" (she gave an arch side-glance at him and a gentle laugh), "but would pour out his blood like water for me, if I wished."

"A kind of lover you will find it hard to meet with in these prosaic times."

"Then I'll live and die an old maid. I hope we shall be friends, in spite of this," she said, very kindly, and holding out her hand—"all the better friends because we understand each other better."

Fothergill was a proud man, and his rejection was a deep wound to him; but he took the hand, and raised it respectfully to his lips. "So much for my ambition!" he said, with a sigh.

"You will have a nobler ambition some time, depend on it, dear Mr. Fothergill. But just one word more before we pass from the subject, never to talk or think of it

again. I hope you do not accuse me of, in any way or at any time, drawing you on to say anything of this kind. If there is one name under heaven I despise and abhor, it is that of flirt."

"Nay, let me do you justice there. You never said a word to me that a man of any sense could think more than innocent fun."

"Well, here is the waterfall," said Kate. "Shall we join the others?—Mr. Truman, Mr. Fothergill and I are agreed that you are the man in all the world who is most afraid of damp feet." By this attack, she succeeded in covering the embarrassment which she thought Fothergill would feel on joining the party.

"Do you really think so?" exclaimed the simple parson. "It's all very fine talking, Miss Oliphant, but I had a cold before I left St. John's; and my doctor—it was

Hepworth, a Magdalene man (you may know him, Fothergill,—he went to London afterwards)—well, he told me I must take the greatest care. And if ever I get my feet wet, sure enough I suffer for it.”

“And so you must needs have a dozen pairs of boots warming at the fire for you every day—don’t tell me; I saw them the afternoon I penetrated your sanctum by stealth. If you had the sins of all England on your shoulders instead of the light little peccadillos of a hundred or two good people like ourselves, you could not be more careful of yourself. I believe you are saving yourself up for a bishopric.”

“No, no; it is on Miss Norber’s account,” said Holden. “Have you not heard, Miss Oliphant? There is an alarming crisis in the lapdog’s illness, and Truman has been there every day the last week. The con-

solation, however, is reported to have been very effectual, and Miss Norber is better, I believe, than could be expected."

"I say, Holden," the parson was beginning; but Kate, though at another time she would have enjoyed teasing the good-natured clergyman on this subject also, was afraid that just at present it might not be a very agreeable one to Fothergill. She hastened to say, therefore :

"I am inclined to think it is the bishopric, myself; for I saw something like a shovel-hat in a quiet corner of the sanctum. You will perhaps be trying to explain that broad circumstance away next, Mr. Truman."

"Nay, now, Miss Oliphant, I'll tell you what; I'd gladly give all my chance of a bishopric to have my tackle here just now. Never saw such a beautiful fly-water in my life. D'ye see yon bit of a stream between the two big rocks below the pool? I'll

warrant I'd have fetched you out three or four rattling trout from that spot in ten minutes."

"I see—where the water, after getting its breath, thinks it is time to be trotting on again, but starts very gently?"

"Ay, it has to feel first if its legs are sound after its tumble," muttered Fothergill.

"Or perhaps it is sorry to leave such a grand scene in a hurry," said Holden.

"See, Highside. I'd just stand on these stones and cast a *leetle* bit to the right of the first big rock. 'Twould be a hardish throw, too; but here's the place to stand; don't you think so?"

"O Mr. Truman, you are forgetting your feet; pray think of the bishopric and our grief," cried Kate. For in his enthusiasm for the gentle art, he was striding from one slippery stone to another till he reached a

point several yards from the side, where he kept throwing up his right arm artistically, as if trying a cast.

“Aa man, but I could do it nicely from here !” he exclaimed. But from the suddenness with which he turned round to speak, he lost his balance and slipped over shoe-tops into the stream. He waded ashore with a rueful face, amid screams of laughter.

“That’s a bad job, Miss Oliphant,” he said ; “I shall be laid up for a week, and you’ll have to preach next Sunday’s sermon yourself. If I’d only my rod with me now, I should not care. It is a strange thing, I never do catch cold when I am out fishing, however wet I get ; but the least thing gives me one at other times. Odd, isn’t it?”

“Very odd, indeed,” answered Kate, with another laugh. “Your rod is plainly a specific for colds, and we shall all of us expect a chip of it to carry about with us.

But I'll preach for you with pleasure ; only I shall take for my text 'Thou didst set them in slippery places,' or something equally appropriate. I think I should have a congregation the first Sunday, at all events."

CHAPTER III.

MR. OLIPHANT DISCOURSES ON THE MORALITY
OF HORSE-DEALING, AND BUYS ONE.

THE day of the Oliphants' picnic was a high day at Reinsber, having been from time immemorial the annual fair of the place. From an early hour droves of cattle, sheep, and rustics filled the streets of the village and overflowed for hundreds of yards along the roads leading out of it. A stranger would have been amused by the scraps of uncouth dialect, and the appearance of the various groups—the drovers trying to keep their herds together by frantic shouts,

wild gesticulations, and much plying of sticks—the intending purchasers walking round a ‘beast’ and examining it first with sagacious eye, then with a skilful pressure of the hand along the back and flanks—and the pair who, after haggling loudly for half an hour, finally clenched the bargain by the purchaser putting a knife into the seller’s hand, and adjourned to oil their tongues at the nearest ale-house. On each side of the street was a row of stalls—with fruit, gingerbread, confectionery, and pop—much patronised by young men and women giving one another ‘fairings,’ and by crowds of youngsters, whose mouths were usually adorned, in lieu of moustache, with a broad yellow circle, the only remains of delicious half-pennyworths of toffy.

As the morning went on, most of the sheep and cattle were sold and driven off to

their several destinations, and the business of the rustics being nearly over, their pleasures began. The village green now became the centre of attraction, for here were the peep-shows, merry-go-rounds, and ballad-stalls, with the quack doctor, who had come all the way from London, he assured his patrons, out of pure love for suffering humanity, to work "cures for nothing." Near him a 'Cheap-Jack' was driving a capital trade in guns warranted not to hurt anybody, and tea-kettles which would not (he pledged his honour) come to pieces the *first* time they were used. The famous giant too was there, the greatest wonder in the whole world, except, indeed, the equally remarkable dwarf, whom this clever show-man had also been fortunate enough to secure — privileged man, to be bearing about in his caravan two of our seven won-

ders, and happy little Reinsber, to have them brought to its own doors! Hard by, the proprietor of a travelling menagerie was giving proof that he had the best pair of lungs in the fair, by his stentorian "Now, this way, ladies and gentlemen, this way! roll up, roll up! performance just going to commence: only three pence!" and who could resist stepping in to see "The famous Hamadryad or Lion Slayer," which was painted in vivid colours and of monstrous size on the canvas outside, but turned out to be a chimpanzee, "a troop of which animals had once been known" (by the natives) "to kill a lion"? The show of greatest pretensions, however, was a panorama of tropical scenery, in which the chief attractions appeared to be "Afric's Tree with legs," the "Burly Unicorn snorting defiance at all the world's creatures;" and "the splendid tropical moon

lighting up the mountain tops with silver and lions ;” the panorama was worth the two-pence if it were only to see this novel and mysterious way of illumination, and the proportions in which the moon mixed its lions and silver to get it.

Bargaining for the horses was always reserved till the afternoon, being, in the eyes of these canny Yorkshiremen, at least as much a matter of amusement as of business. On the road, therefore, which ran through the green, each hack or cob was trotted out by its owner, and had its points canvassed by a line of deeply interested spectators.

It was about two o’clock—just the time at which the horse-dealing was at its height, the green most crowded, and the bawling of the quack-doctor and showmen loudest—when Mr. Oliphant might have been seen making his way through the

excited farmers, who were looking at the horses. He wanted a cart-horse; but he had also supplied himself with abundance of the S. P. V. prospectuses, which for the last hour he had been engaged in distributing. He had heard so much, too, about the tricks common in horse-jobbing, that he thought it necessary to point out to the ignorant dalesmen the immorality of such practices. And what opportunity could be more favourable than this, when his words were likely to be carried into so many different valleys and farmsteads? After whispering, therefore, to the farmers near him, that he wished to speak to them, he selected for his pulpit some stone steps by which the rustic jockeys mounted their horses. Being thus elevated, he instantly drew the attention of the mob, and a large crowd gathered round him, all very curious to know what he was going to do or say.

“Gentlemen !”

“Whisht ! It’s Mr. Oliphant.”

“What, is he boun to speak ?”

“Surely to goodness but he is.”

“My, but he does hod hissel rarely.
Whisht !”

“Gentlemen, a word of caution and advice. To-day is a great day with you, and among all the sights of the fair this excellent show of horses is not the least attractive or important. Now it is just about these horses and the dealing in them that I wish to speak. Everyone knows that Yorkshiremen are reckoned shrewd in horseflesh ; but I do fear this shrewdness is often only another name for dishonesty. In other things you are honest enough. If you are selling a house or a cow, you ask a fair price and no more ; but if you are selling a horse, you actually take a pride in passing off an unsound animal as sound.”

“Ay, begow, it’s diamond cut diamond i’ horse-trading,” cried Stephen Moorby, a tall, broad-shouldered yeoman. “If chaps ’at are green at t’ job will meddle wi’ it, they’re tied to git t’ warst o’ t’ bargain, Mr. Oliphant.”

“So you seem to think in Yorkshire, Mr. Moorby. If a horse is vicious I have heard that you give him laudanum; and if he is broken-winded, you stuff his nostrils with something.” (Laughter.)

“He hes heard about Ringtail Roarer,” whispered Stephen, with a grin, to his next neighbour, a Quaker farmer. “Dick Wide-awake hes seld him a dozen times for twenty pund, an’ all’ays hed him given back. He hes bin a lile fortun to Dick, hes that horse.”

“If he is aged, or spavined, or blind, or lame, you have other devices—very clever no doubt” (renewed laughter), “but surely not very honourable.”

“Friend Oliphant,” said the Quaker, “this is a timely lesson to us. But thee mightest mention other devices which the unrighteous have for deceiving the unwary in the matter of horses ; such as constraining the poor animals to swallow a pound of shot, or bacon, or a nauseous mixture of milk and cowdung, if they are not sound in the wind : then, if they are old, as thee sayest, the ungodly men file their teeth and mark them with ink—all which things seem to me scarce innocent.” (Great laughter at each item of the list.)

“I am deeply indebted to you, sir, for mentioning these facts, which I hope will not be without effect on the minds of our audience,” resumed Jabez, smiling graciously on Isaiah. “Gentlemen, you evidently look on horse-trickery as a joke—a keen encounter of wits ?”

“*That* we do, Mr. Oliphant!” shouted Moorby ; “it’s best fun out — bangs

penny peep - shows aw to nought !”
(Laughter.)

“ Friend Moorby is a little too ready with his tongue,” said the Quaker. “ Thee should not interrupt him, Stephen ; he is saying nothing but what is right.”

“ Well, gentlemen, I ask you, is it a joke for the purchaser ? Is it a joke to give twenty pounds for an animal not worth five ?” (Laughter.) “ I scarcely know what you are laughing at” (fresh laughter) ; “ but I am sure you only sell unsound animals for sound because, living in these remote dales, you are ignorant of the great principles of right and wrong in the matter, and have had no one hitherto to explain the thing to you.

“ The basis of all commerce, gentlemen, is good faith. Look at me. I was once only one of yourselves ; now I am rich beyond my utmost wish : and I became so

by never giving my word where I did not mean to keep it, by never selling damaged goods as perfect, by avoiding even the appearance of trickery. It was by these means that I raised myself to my present (ahem !) my present position—by these means alone, gentlemen. I avoided deception on principle, and not because I was afraid of having it practised on myself. It is, of course, necessary for a business man always to have his eyes about him ; and I may say that I never yet [found any one who was able to cheat me. So in time people came to know their man, and whatever dupery they might resort to with others, they never even attempted it with myself. The same path, gentlemen, is open to you all.”

“Thee art an honour to the place, friend Oliphant.—Ah, what a minister he would have made !” the Quaker added, in a reve-

rential tone, not quite low enough to escape Mr. Oliphant's very sharp ears.

Jabez smiled and bowed to him, and then proceeded to impress on the crowd the advantages of the S.P.V., informing them that he intended to wait at the Red Lion for three hours, namely, till five o'clock, to receive the names of members. He trusted, however, that there would be no ugly rush into the room, but that all would enter in an orderly and proper manner.

After descending from the steps amid loud and gratifying applause, Mr. Oliphant was escaping from the crowd when he was accosted by the Quaker, Isaiah Ducksberry. Jabez had been much pleased with this man's demeanour, and felt there was ground for hoping that his earnest words had wrought conviction on at least one of his hearers; nor was it unnatural that a

member of the most truly pious sect we have should be the first to have his conscience awakened.

“Friend,” said Isaiah, “I have been touched with this discourse of thine, and if thee art at liberty, I should be glad to hear further of this matter.”

“I am very proud to make your acquaintance, Mr. Ducksberry—very proud indeed. I wish the rest of my audience had shown as true a sense as yourself of the real nature of this abominable horse-jobbing. You, sir, are a man who, by your private influence and the character of the body to which you belong, might do much in putting a stop to all this.”

“Nay, nay, I am but a weak vessel; very brittle on small occasions, ignorant besides.”

“Tell not me, sir. I have lived in cities all my life, and am a judge of men. It is

not education, or birth, or money, that gives influence; it is the moral character, and your physiognomy tells me that you are an honest man."

"I fear thy kindness misjudges me. I am a reserved, diffident man. Yet if I thought—but could I really do thee any good?"

Mr. Oliphant landed so valuable a fish very skilfully. "Much, much, Mr. Ducksberry," he said. "You must not under-rate yourself. Your assistance will be of the very greatest value to me. Have you seen a prospectus of our society, Mr. Ducksberry?"

"Yea, and I may say I consider it likely, with the blessing, to do great things for Reinsber. Against my poor self joining it however, I have one or two—well, I could scarce call them scruples—but I would like them removed before I could conscientiously join thee."

“What are they? Let us hear them as we go along,” said Jabez; and such was his eloquence that, before they sat long in the room he had engaged, he removed all Isaiah’s scruples, and his name was the very first which was entered that day, though (as Mr. Oliphant carefully explained) he was unlikely to get a prize, since some of the acts for which marks were given, such as bowing, were contrary to Quaker principles.

“Well now, friend Oliphant,” said Isaiah, rising, “I must tear myself away from this dear bewitching discourse of thine. I would gladly have staid awhile longer, but I have brought a horse to sell, and I must mix with the world again.”

“A horse, Mr. Ducksberry! That is rather singular; I wish to buy one. How glad I should be if yours would suit me!”

“Nay, thou wilt be in want of a showy animal, such as is fitting for rich men like

thyself. Mine is but a poor cart-horse ; but thou wilt be helped in thy choice, I do not doubt, as thou deservest to be."

"Not so fast, if you please. A cart-horse is just the horse I want. Let us have a look at him."

"As thou wilt ; but I am assured he will not suit thee."

"No harm in seeing him, at any rate. Come."

The horse was in the quietest back-stables of the inn, for Isaiah disliked the bustle and vanities of the fair, and trusted to find, if the Lord willed it so, some sober godly man as a purchaser. When the animal was led out, he was a strong, well-built chestnut, about the size that Jabez required. The latter did not know so much of horse-flesh as of the world, but he ran his eye over him and examined his points in silence, with the air of a connoisseur.

"I told thee he would be scarce fine

enough for thee," said Isaiah. "Lead him back into the stable, John, and here is a groat for thy trouble."

"I had rather deal at a word with yourself, Mr. Ducksberry," said Mr. Oliphant, "than with most men on their bond. What is your price for this horse? He will suit me if we can agree as to terms."

"I am surprised. Well, if thee really hast any thought of him, I told Rachel, my wife, before I started this morning, that I had little doubt of taking back to her thirty pounds for the beast; but I am willing to let thee, friend Oliphant, have him for five and twenty. Surely I should be ungrateful, after what thou hast done for me this day, if I were hard on thee in a matter of bargaining."

"Pooh, pooh, Mr. Ducksberry, I am not going to make a profit out of you. I will give you the thirty pounds for him gladly,

if you can warrant him sound in wind and limb."

"Yea, I can warrant him perfectly sound in wind and limb."

"And he can draw?"

"It would do thee good to see him draw, friend."

"Then I am perfectly satisfied, and much obliged to you. John, send to the Hall, and tell Foster to fetch this horse; I have just bought him. There is your money, Mr. Ducksberry: Craven notes will do, I suppose."

"Ah, friend, may we never see anything worse in the world than these!" said Isaiah, putting away the notes in his great drab-coloured pocket-book, after counting them deliberately. "And now I must away to my Rachel, who will doubtless be expecting me to tea. I know not how to thank thee sufficiently; but thy reward is not of this world. And I am glad thee mettest with

me, and not with that profane and riotous man, Richard Wideawake."

Mr. Oliphant returned to the little bar-parlour, and sat for a long time with the pen and ink ready before him, but no candidates for admission into the S. P. V. made their appearance as yet. From half-past two to half-past three, he was of opinion that the farmers were engaged in settling their accounts, for he could hear the loud voices of several merry companies in the adjoining rooms ; or perhaps they might be busy discussing the pros and cons of the prospectus ; he knew the cautious nature of these dalesmen, especially with regard to setting their hands to paper. A number of them, however, would probably enter together to sign their names all at once. From half-past three to half-past four, he thought they might possibly be diffident about coming into the presence of one to whom they would naturally look up ; he rang the

bell, therefore, several times, to ask if no one had inquired for him, and he even opened the door once or twice to look if there were not two or three hulking farmers outside, willing, yet too shy, to come in. Perhaps, however, they would slink in by ones and twos, when the throng of the fair was over and there was less danger of attracting notice ; so strong is the fear of ridicule, even in doing what one knows to be right. He now blamed himself for selecting so exposed a room as an inn-parlour, and thought it might have been more politic to name his own house as the place of rendezvous, but he would know better another time. As no one came up to half-past four, he grew somewhat impatient, and frequently looked at his watch—not that he would break his promise of waiting for members till five. It struck him at last that he ought scarcely to have expected these ignorant men to join immediately after reading the pro-

spectus—a work of great difficulty at any time to such illiterate persons, and perhaps, in the distraction of a crowd, utterly impracticable ; and they might naturally like some time for reflection before giving in their adhesion to so solemn and important a thing as the S. P. V. But they would take the prospectuses home with them, discuss them fully with their wives, and afterwards come to him privately.

Thus Mr. Oliphant was far from being dispirited, though not a soul had entered the room except Isaiah ; but a few minutes before five he began packing up his numerous documents. Just at that time, however, he heard a hurried knock at the door, and hastily put the papers down again, to be ready. It turned out, however, to be Foster, the groom from the Hall. His face had some blood on it, and his clothes were a good deal torn.

“ Oh, it is only you, Foster, is it ? ” ex-

claimed Mr. Oliphant. "Well, what do you want? And in that state, too! What has happened?"

"Has the man gone, sir?" asked Foster, breathlessly, but not forgetting to touch his cap.

"What man?"

"The man you bought the horse from, sir. Here has been a pretty to-do, sir. You know you sent for me to fetch a horse you had just bought, and as I knew you wanted him to cart the manure to-morrow, I thought I would try him at once."

"That was right. Well?"

"Well, sir, the long and the short of it is, he has either never been in traces before or he's desperately vicious. He was quiet enough, sir, till I got him into the shafts; then he began. First his forefeet up, then his heels, and in less than a minute he had smashed the cart to shivers, spite of all I could do to hold him. He

kicked me on the cheek—here, sir—and another time ripped up my coat as you see. I never had such a near shave in my life. But I ran down at once, sir, to see if you could find the man and return him. You got a warranty, I suppose, sir?”

“Certainly. I think, Foster, there is some mistake here, and it will be best to see Mr. Ducksberry, the person from whom I bought him, at once. He is a very honest man, and will do what is right, without doubt. Will you inquire if Mr. Ducksberry is still in the village? I fear not, for he was going home to tea.”

Foster soon returned with the information that Isaiah had been seen in the street only two or three minutes before, and Mr. Oliphant found him as he was bidding adieu from the back of his little nag to a group of farmers. Isaiah blushed very faintly as he caught sight of Jabez.

“Mr. Ducksberry,” said the latter, kindly,

“you have made a little mistake about this horse you have just sold me. He has broken my cart and injured my groom, and I am afraid I shall be obliged to return him.”

“Friend Oliphant, a bargain is a bargain ; with thy experience of men, thee must know that. I tried to dissuade thee from purchasing the beast, as thee knowest ; but as thee hast bought him, thee must stand by thy bargain. I never return money—on principle.”

“But he has never, my groom tells me, been in a cart before, and you told me he could draw, sir.”

“Friend, friend, thee art a little ruffled, and it will proceed if thee dost not bridle it soon. But thy memory wanteth refreshing. I only told thee it would do thee good to see him draw, and I trust in the Lord it may. But Rachel expecteth me. Good day, friend Oliphant, and thank thee much

for all the profit thy worldly and spiritual knowledge hath brought me this day."

"Scoundrel!" broke from Mr. Oliphant's lips, and a roar of laughter from the farmers, as Isaiah struck his heels into the galloway's sides, and cantered demurely off.

"I niver seed a better bite i' my life, Mr. Oliphant," grinned Dick Wideawake at that gentleman's elbow. "What, ye niver bowt a horse fra that snivelling Quaker, surely? If I'd known ye wor i' treaty wi' him, I'd ha cautioned ye, as a friend like; but he gat ye to do it sa slily; he's t' slyest rogue i' aw Yorkshire."

"Barrin' thysel, Dick," said half the farmers at least.

"Whya, whya, nebbors," answered Dick, considerably flattered; "I'se not saying but that I knaw a thing or two mysel i' horse-flesh. But when I cheat, begow, I cheat honestly, not wi' praying and soft sawder and turning up t' whites o' my een

like a duck i' a thunder-storm—come, now, ye'll aw allow that. An' what might ye give for t' horse, Mr. Oliphant, if it's a fair question?"

"I gave thirty pounds, Richard."

"What, for Isaiah's horse? Why, it 'ud be dear at fifteen! Lord, Lord, I niver knew sich a thing!" Dick enjoyed the joke a good deal though, to judge by his frequent chuckling.

"Well, I cannot yet imagine, Richard, that he will keep money so dishonestly got," said Mr. Oliphant; "I think he will bring it back in the morning."

"Ye think what?" exclaimed Dick, in utter amazement. "Excuse me, Mr. Oliphant, but ye mun hev a slate off yer heead, to think o' sich a thing. Whaiver 'ud dream o' gitting butter out of Isaiah Ducksberry's throat?"

"Is he so notorious a character?"

"He is *that*. What, did ye niver hear

what he did at Langpreston market? He hed a cartload o' taties 'at wor aw bad, an' he thowt he'd tak 'em a good bit off where he warn't sae well known; sa he carried 'em to Langpreston market. 'But are they good uns, Isaiah?' they axed afore they bowt 'em. 'We've never had such a lot about the place before,' says Isaiah; an' wi' that they bowt 'em—he seld ivery taty afore they knew ought about it. An' just as he wor driving off haam, yan on 'em 'at wanted some mair, axed him if he'd be that way again soon. 'I dare say I may, friend,' says he, soft like, 'by the time thee wilt want more.' And they niver guessed ought wor wrang till they boiled 'em. Aa, he's a clever chap, is Isaiah; he'd talk t' hind leg off a jackass."

"Well, I shall see my lawyer about the matter, Richard." But Mr. Oliphant's lawyer gave him cold comfort on this occasion, and Isaiah retained his thirty pounds in

peace. He even felt so grateful to Jabez that he referred frequently to a circumstance which that gentleman, with a silence that did him honour, never mentioned—viz. the fact of Mr. Oliphant's having generously given him five pounds more for the horse than he had asked for it. Jabez perhaps did not know the flattering way in which Isaiah spoke of him behind his back, for he resolutely struck the Quaker's name off the list of the S. P. V.

CHAPTER IV.

A N A D V E N T U R E.

THE lunch in front of the waterfall went off merrily. Kate was in high spirits, and flung her good-natured badinage at each of her guests in turn. She spared Fothergill, indeed, contrary to her usual habit, but, on the other hand, she was merciless to Holden, with whom her ladyship was really angry, she could not tell why, except that, since his interview with Fothergill, he had been perceptibly reserved with her, and was still more so to-day.

When the meal was over, Frank took out his water-colours and began a rough sketch

of the view before him. The scene was certainly a grand one, for there had been two or three days' rain, and the stream was in full force. Directly in front it threw itself down a precipice of ninety feet, broken only by a few sharp rocks, on which part of the descending water struck and was instantly dashed into spray, while the main body of the torrent rushed down unbroken to the deep circular pool below. Even there, so great was the speed and mass of the falling stream, that it forced its way down still, and then, bounding up again with much angry foam and bubbling, spread itself out in waves that grew less in height as they widened till they sank altogether in the still and terribly dark water at the sides of the pool below the cliffs. The picture was completed by a semicircular wall of grey limestone, two hundred feet high, and varied here and there by a stunted yew or mountain-ash that had contrived in

some strange way to get foothold in the crevices far overhead.

“What colour, Miss Oliphant, do you think one should paint yon water in the middle of the fall?” asked Frank.

“Violent green, to be sure, Mr. Holden. Pray do not talk any more ‘shop.’”

“Kate!” remonstrated Dora.

“That is the one advantage,” replied Holden, laughing, “which you amateurs have over us professionals: we must talk and think ‘shop’ all day.”

“Think it as much as you like—nobody will care; only do not give us the benefit of it. If you will talk, give us a glowing description of the waterfall. You might, perhaps, make yourself amusing in that way, instead of brooding over that water-colour.”

“Certainly,” replied Frank, taking up with imperturbable good-humour the challenge thus scornfully thrown down, “if you

think such a description would please any one."

"What you have before you, ladies and gentlemen," he continued, quietly going on with his painting as he talked, "is a mighty temple, divinely beautiful, as you see, and one of the most ancient in the world. It was built ages and ages of immeasurable æons before man had a history or was thought of, in the dim nebulous era before time was, and when there were strange races on a strange earth. The architects were tiny beings that laid the foundation-stone at the bottom of the sea, and, cheered in their green twilight only by the faint murmurs of the waves overhead, reared the walls painfully and lovingly, course by course,—giving their lives, millions of them, to the task; the bones of countless generations are built into the great structure just where they died at their work. When the rough masonry was

done at last, the gnomes, that have supremacy over the fires underground, lifted the thing up, as it was, on their huge shoulders, and by main strength raised [it from the silent sea-bed and placed it here for the winds to harden, and the rains to polish, and the lightnings to chisel out into arch, architrave, and column. Thus all the elements contributed their part to form or beautify the great building, and, in the course of a few millions of centuries more, it was pretty nearly as complete as you see it now,—with its vast and solemn amphitheatre—its long arcades rich in all glorious fretwork and tracery—its cyclopean buttresses stage on stage—its aspiring towers, battlements, and pinnacles above—its vaults of gloom underneath, and the glittering mosaic of its many-tinted waters.

“The worshippers at this temple, Miss Mansfield, are the Spirits of the Earth ; what seems to us spray is the incense they

are offering ; and what we think the thunder of the water-fall is their prayer, going up for ever and ever to the throne of God."

"There will be some painters for the shrine, you will see, Dora," said Kate aloud.

"There are six, Miss Oliphant," replied Frank, "and all immortal,—the ministering priests of the Almighty, Spring and Summer, Autumn and Winter, with their attendant Levites, Day and Night. Each of these comes in due order and succession to touch the walls and the rich hangings of the temple with his own colours. Their styles are widely different, but they are all great artists, and their work is so beautiful that you always like the last painting of the temple best. Autumn, as you see, prefers gorgeous purples blending with russet, and gold, and green, and every colour of the rainbow. Night is all for dark grey ; while Winter, who is an old fellow, uses a great deal of flake-white."

“Poor things, what confusion and quarrelling there must be among the six artists!” said Kate.

“None whatever; each of them knows his time, and they are all gentlemen,” returned Frank with a sly glance; and Miss Oliphant blushed a little, not quite knowing whether the last word was a hit at herself through the sex.

“But I say, Holden, have they no sermons?” asked the parson.

“Unless you favour them sometimes when you are here fishing by yourself, Truman, I believe no sermons are ever preached in the temple. Instead, there is music, sweet and solemn, played by spirits far away beneath the amber waters in the recesses of the inmost shrine. The strains never cease, inextricably linked together night and day with surge and swell, vibration and ‘dying fall’—but all of it is beyond comparison of mortal instruments.”

“Rather monotonous, though, the music,” is it not?” asked Fothergill, with a yawn.

“Ah, that is because a single bar of their music lasts much longer, of course, than an ordinary man’s life. We cannot measure their time by ours, you see; but if you come again in a hundred thousand years or so—you’ll be transformed, Fothergill, into a good-natured cherub by that time” (this parenthesis excited a little laughter at the cynic’s expense)—“why, the spirits will probably have finished this tune and begun another. Nor again is this beautiful drapery of trees, ferns, and grass, the usual state of the temple: true, these were there long before man crept from the dust of earth, but they are only up for a day after all—one of the gala days of the immortals; just as your church at Christmas, Truman, is hung for a single morning with ivy, which is taken down the next.”

“Ve-ry good,” applauded the incumbent, seeing that Holden had done ; “you’ve only made one omission that I can tell ; you’ve said nothing about the swarms of trout there are in the pool ; now to my mind, they’re the most important part of the whole thing.” Then, as evening was coming on, it was decided that after walking round to look at the Force from above, the party should return to the carriages.

“How harsh you were to Mr. Holden, Kate,” said Dora, as she made her way by her friend’s side up the slope of the glen ; “I am sure he must feel your sarcasms very much.”

“I only hope he does ; but never fear, he has the hide of a rhinoceros, that man. I dislike him.”

“O Kate, why ?”

“Well—well—never mind why ; did my wise little Mentor never find out that I am

wretchedly capricious? It is one of my whims."

"Nay, you are not capricious, and I never knew you severe on any one before, except indeed the three saints."

Kate laughed. "Yes, that was very good fun, and they deserved it. But why does Mr. Holden, after being so pleasant at first, why does he——but he is not worth talking about. Dear me, how steep it is!"

"He is worth talking about," answered the other, determined in her gentle way to set the world to rights. "There are very few gentlemen who would have taken so quietly the sharp things you said to him; and his description of the waterfall, so far as I could understand him, was very fine indeed."

"Florid, very; and all from Ruskin, whom he swears by—only spoiled in the stealing. You have a pretty brooch there."

“ You must have seen my brooch a hundred times, Kate.”

“ Perhaps I have.—And you really think I did manage to gall him a little ?”

“ Surely you saw that yourself.”

“ Then I am very glad, and I’ll do it again,” said the other sharply ; but Dora thought it best to be silent whilst her friend was in this strange mood.

After half an hour’s climb, the party stood near the place where the water began its descent. From this position they could only see part of the fall, the lower half being hidden by projecting rocks and clouds of spray : but perhaps the very mystery made the scene more striking, and they loitered about admiring the furious unhesitating plunge of the torrent into what now appeared a bottomless pandemonium ; the cliffs and winding glen below being darkened and made more terrific by the failing twilight.

Holden had seated himself on the bank "to catch a grand bit of colour," and Fothergill had wandered forty or fifty yards up the stream to indulge his own reflections, when the attention of both was aroused by a plunge, heard above the monotonous roar of the fall. Screams followed, and one terrified shriek, in which Fothergill recognised Miss Mansfield's voice: "Help, help—for God's sake, help, Mr. Fothergill."

William ran to the place where a frightened group was collected on the bank, and there was Dora with the rest of the ladies, one or two on their knees, some screaming, some rushing here and there, but all very pale and looking hard at the same point in the stream.

"There—there, Mr. Fothergill," cried Dora, pointing as he came up breathless; and as he looked he perceived something in the water with a white patch or face

attached—another eddy of the stream turned the white face towards him, and he saw it was Kate's.

She was always too venturesome, and to get a better view of the fall, had been standing on the very edge of a rock which overhung the stream. The rock gave way, and there she was.

As William sprang from the group to the point opposite the unhappy girl, he hesitated what to do. The torrent was several yards in breadth, and though only four or five feet deep was boiling along with a speed and fury that would sweep the strongest man off his feet. Even an attempt to swim it seemed the wildest folly; for not more than seven or eight yards away was the fall, and any one going over would either strike the rocks half-way down or be drowned at the bottom. Towards the brink, too, the stream, as if gathering speed for its leap, was

hurrying on faster and faster every yard.

“If there were the most infinitesimal chance of saving her——or, ah, if she had even accepted him!”

So Fothergill hesitated amid overwhelming and conflicting emotions during the few seconds in which he had to make up his mind; and he was only like the rest. Highside was gesticulating like a madman and appealing to his neighbours, “What must we do? Can’t you suggest anything?” The incumbent (there is always a touch of the comic in nature’s tragedies) kept ejaculating to the poor girl herself, as he trotted alongside, “Oh dear, Miss Oliphant! Oh dear, Miss Oliphant!” as if his pity could stop her. So with most of the others. But as William almost decided on the fatal leap, the sound of some one else plunging in told him that he was anticipated.

It was the artist. Like Fothergill, he had heard the first shrieks, and being nearer had partly seen the cause. To throw down his sketch and reach the people on the bank, to hear it was Miss Oliphant, and then to burst through them, and keeping his eye steadily on Kate, to dart ahead of the runners and her, was all the work of a moment. He stands now an instant on the edge, but it is not in hesitation. He has already made up his mind to rescue her or die, but he is measuring the difficulties and surveying any possible chance of escape there may be in that seven or eight yards of roaring water. He was never more cool in his life.

Within two feet of the brink of the waterfall there was a pole as thick as a man's arm, and stretching horizontally from bank to bank. It was about three feet above the stream, and no doubt had been put there by some farmer to support a

movable water-gate, for the purpose of stopping sheep from being washed over the Force. In summer, when the stream was nearly dry, the contrivance was probably successful ; but the man must have been a Reinsber carle indeed if he thought it could be of any use in a flood like this. The gate itself had been swept away, very likely in the first ‘fresh,’ but the larch-pole from which it hung was still there, and apparently well fixed in the rocks at each side.

The pole seemed to be Frank’s only chance. His first notion was to get down to it and wait there in the hope of seizing Kate as she passed ; but, besides the probability of missing his aim, the bank was so rocky that he could not have reached the place before Kate was over. Not quite a minute—for actions and thoughts come quick and crowded in such emergencies—had yet elapsed altogether since he was roused by Dora’s shrieks.

He changes his plan—just as the stream brings Kate opposite him—and leaps into the water beside her. Grasping her dress, he struggles madly for an instant to keep his feet: the next, he finds this impossible, and is being hurried along with her very fast; for the stream, now that it is so near the brink, is running with all the force of a mill-race. But he clasps her round the waist with his left arm, and with the other takes three or four vehement strokes towards the bank he has just quitted. He has not time for more, but an inch or two nearer the side may make all the difference.

They are only a yard from the pole now, and with a desperate effort, into which he puts, as it seems to himself, the strength of half a dozen men, he brings his feet to the bottom once more and springs at the pole. He strikes with his side heavily against the wood, and twists his right arm round it. At the same time he lifts up his bur-

den as much as possible, and gains some support by letting her lean on the pole, which she also grasps by way of seconding his efforts.

Yet it is the frailest support, surely, that man ever trusted to. It is old, covered with moss, and not very securely fastened, while—what with the rude shock it received when Holden sprang at it, what with their weight and the force the torrent exerts on it through them—it bends so much that both expect each second will be the last. The water below also threatens to tear them off, and causes a terrible strain on Frank's part to resist it. Still, as its power is rather lessened by the much smaller part of their dresses and persons which is now under water, he thinks, if the larch will only hold, that he may perhaps keep up for a minute or two, but not longer.

Fortunately it was enough. The rest of

the party, as may be supposed, had followed them, and Fothergill, Highside, and others, with some difficulty descended the rocky bank. Then, by holding with one hand the branch of a mountain-ash that grew out of the rocks, William got a foot on the pole and stretched out till he could reach Kate, who, owing to Holden's strokes, was not more than a yard from the side. Grasping her under the arms, he shouts out to Frank to "let go," and as the artist complies, swings her clear of the stream at last. Highside seizing an arm, she is soon out of their hands and laid on the grass, amid breathless silence, for there is still another fellow-creature in terrible danger.

Fothergill turns now to help Frank also. But it is too late. With a sudden snap, the pole, which has been subjected to so hard a strain, parts asunder where Holden is leaning on it, and in a second the two

bits and he are hurried over the precipice like feathers. The momentary passage of something dark down the white wild mass of water is all the horrified party see of the thing, and he is gone.

They could hardly believe their eyes, till Fothergill exclaimed, in a low, horror-struck voice, "My God—he's over!" William was in imminent danger himself for a short time; for, one of his feet being on the treacherous larch when it gave way, he found himself suddenly swinging in mid-air, supported only by the branch which he still grasped with one hand. Recovering from his surprise, however, he soon got foothold against the rock, and scrambled to the top.

Miss Oliphant, though almost fainting, was the first to rouse herself and start off, which she did without a word. They guessed her purpose, however, and followed her—they must at any rate go and look

for poor Holden's body. Truman alone found breath to cry out in scattered sentences as he ran, "Don't hurry, Miss Oliphant, we cannot possibly save him ; you'll only kill yourself, and he is dead by this time, poor, poor fellow !" Kate, however, did not stop, but on the contrary redoubled her speed, and most of the party did the same. Before descending Fothergill had sufficient presence of mind to send Highside to the nearest farm-house for blankets and some kind of drag, on the very faint hope that there might be life in the body when it was found.

Ten or fifteen minutes elapsed before even the most active could reach the spot where they had lunch, so that when they stood once more by the edge of the pool, an ominous gloom had settled over the place, and they could see no living thing, and hear nothing except the thunder of the relentless waterfall. Though this was only

what every one expected, there were few who did not experience that revulsion of feeling, that sudden chill of despair which strikes through persons of any sensibility on finding their worst fears confirmed. No one spoke for a time as they looked mournfully at the pool which had just received its victim.

“I wish they would bring the drags,” said William at last. “We shall have a hard night’s work. Poor fellow!”

A response came from a quarter he little expected.

“Helloa!” cried a faint voice from somewhere on the pool; “is that you, Fothergill? You have been a long time in getting down; but I suppose I came by the short cut.”

There could be no doubt—it was Holden’s voice—and, on looking closer, Truman saw the man himself coolly enjoying a pipe on one of the large rocks to which the angler had called attention in the morning.

It will easily be conceived what a sudden change came over the company, and how a shower of joyful exclamations, expressions of astonishment, appeals to him to speak again, questions and advice, was poured on him.

“I cannot answer quite all that from this rock,” said Holden, laughing, “but if you’ll help me ashore, I’ll try my best. Fling me the end of a plaid, Fothergill. I am rather dizzy, and dare not trust myself to swim to land without something to hold by.” By these means he was soon ashore.

“What a comfort a good smoke is after a thing of this sort!” was his first remark as he sat in the middle of the company, which was still lost in amazement at his resurrection. “I put my tobacco and vesuvians in a waterproof case only this very morning, Fothergill. How is Miss Oliphant?”

“She is here—quite well: but how did

you get down ? Pray tell us," exclaimed a number of voices.

"How did I get down ? Oh, partly like an arrow, head foremost, and partly on the pig principle, tail first ; but mainly, I think, on no system at all. The fact is, I don't remember much of it, except that I was shot along like an Enfield bullet, and then went whirling round and round, blinded with being in the water, and deafened with the noise, and that I held my breath as my best chance, and at length came head-first souse into the black pool at the bottom. When I rose, by great good luck, I was close to one of Truman's rocks ; I don't think I could possibly have reached it if it had been more than a stroke or two away. Well, I scrambled up that, and looked up at the fall philosophically, and then down at the pool, to see if I could find any of the parson's trout, and I don't believe there are any. I thought you would come down

before long to look after me, but I did not hear you till you spoke : I have not got the water out of my head yet, and I am rather tired."

In spite of his liveliness, Holden soon gave proof of his last assertion by fainting outright ; and Fothergill, after feeling his pulse, looked grave, and ordered the men who had now arrived with the ropes to convey him to one of the carriages forthwith. The party drove home, therefore, in a sober mood. Kate herself, though she had borne up with astonishing courage, and had never lost her presence of mind throughout, was very thoughtful, and scarcely said a word to any one, except when Dora was bidding her good-night. Then Miss Oliphant said, with her eyes full of tears, " Good-night, dear ; I was very wicked."

Mr. Oliphant was unaffectedly thankful, both for Kate's wonderful preservation and the courage Frank Holden had displayed.

He made a grand and beautiful oration to that effect to the artist, as he was brought in wrapped in the blankets—an oration expressive of his royal gratitude, and his admiration of such daring conduct. The speech was in Mr. Oliphant's best style, but he did not discover till the peroration that it was completely thrown away, as the subject of his panegyric was still insensible. As for Mrs. Oliphant, she remarked that "it was really very good of the young man." Fothergill laughed out to her face, and replied, "He should rather think it was—people generally did think twice before they shot waterfalls a hundred feet high." And Mrs. Oliphant coloured, and thought William one of the rudest men she had ever known. She also thought, but did not say, that the party might as well have left Mr. Holden at the farm-house, instead of giving her all the trouble of nursing him at Reinsber Hall. However,

when Frank was carried to his room and examined, it was found that he had suffered very serious damage, his ribs being crushed in to some extent either by the force with which he came against the pole, or by his touching the rocks in his descent. Whether Mrs. Oliphant liked it or not, therefore, he had to be nursed with the greatest care during some weeks, and for that time was confined to his room. Meanwhile, as sick beds are proverbially tedious, we return to Mr. Oliphant.

CHAPTER V.

REFORMS.

“**N**OTHING is more likely to make a prince esteemed,” says Machiavelli, “than extraordinary actions;” and such seems to have been the maxim on which Jabez Oliphant acted. The present may, perhaps, be considered the happiest period of his reign, for his enemies were extinct, and his superior wisdom and generosity were the wonder of Reinsber: yet, such was the energy of his genius, and so vast his beneficence, that he was labouring night and day to find fresh methods for correcting the faults of every one around him. Of

these toils, which would fill volumes, a very few examples must suffice.

That nothing might be wanting on his part to promote that humility in which the Reinsber spirit was so deficient, Mr. Oliphant resolved to give his neighbours a striking example of the great Christian virtue by taking his place some Sunday morning in the free sittings, which were only occupied, as a rule, by the poorest class. "I may talk for ever about humility, and they will not understand me," he said ; "but if the poor see a rich man like me actually sitting among themselves, they will at least know what the word means."

Accordingly, instead of escorting Mrs. and Miss Oliphant as usual to the great Hall pew, which we have already described, Jabez left them, and, waiting till the church was full that the example might be more impressive, entered by the main door at

the farther end, as he would then have to traverse the central aisle. He was glad to see that the congregation watched him as he walked majestically forward, preceded by a tall footman in the Oliphant livery (blue and silver, with white stockings), and followed at equal distance by another, who carried a blue velvet church service with silver clasps. Jabez stopped at the free pew which seemed most conspicuous, and the first footman held the door till his master seated himself, while the other placed the book on the ledge, and, taking Mr. Oliphant's hat, withdrew with his fellow-servant to another sitting. There were already in the pew, when Jabez entered it, a wheezy old man in fustian, and two or three poor women, who seemed struck dumb by the splendid apparition, and conducted themselves with much decorum during the whole of the service.

Mr. Truman from long habit always

waited till the Hall pew was occupied before he commenced the service, and, as he had not been in the church at the time of Mr. Oliphant's entrance, and did not see him in his usual place, he seemed doubtful about beginning. Jabez, therefore, with great kindness, slightly rose and bowed to him from his new seat, as an intimation that he was present; on which the parson, with a little blush, probably at his own inadvertence, gave out the hymn without more ado,—Mr. Oliphant joining in the responses with a very loud voice, for he wished to teach his poorer neighbours their duty in this respect also. When the ceremony was over, the footmen returned with Mr. Oliphant's hat and escorted him out as before.

I have been thus particular in recording every circumstance of this remarkable act of condescension, because it was the subject of much criticism at Reinsber, from Fother-

gill especially, whose tongue, since he had failed with the niece, was set loose about the uncle.

“Tut, tut ! Oliphantiasis—sheer Oliphantiasis, all this—that’s the best word for it,” he growled to the parson. “It is not the humdrum philanthropy of small things, like thine, friend Truman, nor a curse-and-give philanthropy like my own ;—still less, the white-waistcoat sort that, out of the guinea it gives, spends a pound on turtle-soup for itself, and a shilling on the waiter. No ; Mr. Oliphant’s philanthropy is a turkey-cock kind of his own : it would raise the poor—but only with a pair of tongs, and in case they behave pretty, and touch their caps to him.”

Jabez, however, was confirmed in his opinion that the example had done some good by the eulogies of an old bed-ridden woman named Tennant, a pensioner of the Hall, who declared to him that “she

had niver heard o' sich a nice kind thing as his going an' sitting amang t' poor folk, just as yan o' thersels, like ; an' people had talked a deal about it too." He was well satisfied, therefore, though he used to complain afterwards both about the hardness of the wooden seat and the stench of fustian which he discovered in the pew ; nor did he consider it necessary to repeat the experiment.

A few days afterwards, Mrs. Doolittle informed the village that Mr. Oliphant had been giving her husband a lesson in politeness. Jabez had already presented every householder in Reinsber with a copy of Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*, as the best theoretical exposition we have ; but he felt it would be well if some of the villagers were also instructed practically in good breeding.

"The perfect man of the world, Mr. Doolittle," he said, after he had opened his

business to the awe-struck little grocer, “such as I wish you and the other inhabitants of Reinsber to become, combines an easy assurance with gentle manners. He is neither bashful nor boisterous, speaks not of himself at all, and sparingly of others, unless he can say something in their praise. He neither gives offence nor takes it—is always ready, never anxious to talk—wishing to please, but not officious. To his superiors he is respectful without servility ; to his equals, pleasant without rudeness. It is said that great people, the Chinese, have no fewer than three thousand rules of etiquette, to suit every possible occasion. Well, I would not push the thing quite so far as this ; but it is, at all events, extremely important to know how to treat with propriety those who come to you on business. For instance, Mr. Doolittle, suppose I enter your shop to buy a pound of sugar, how would you serve me ?”

“Give you the very best sixpence-ha’penny,—indeed I would, sir,” answered Tommy.

“Yes, yes, I do not doubt that; but what would be your department to me throughout the transaction? Let me see you.—Now, I come into your shop, and I say, ‘Mr. Doolittle, will you oblige me with a pound of sugar?’ ”

“Sugar, sir? certainly, sir; as much as ever you like, I’m sure,” said Tommy, bustling nervously to his drawer of double-refined, and taking out a huge trowelful, which he proceeded to weigh and present to Mr. Oliphant, who watched him very attentively, and then taking the sugar with much gravity said:

“Thank you.—Now the little affair is over, and I am going.” Accordingly he walked towards the door, looking to see what Tommy would do.

The latter said, “Good morning, sir,”

from behind the counter, and thanked his stars he had got off so easily ; but to think of Mr. Oliphant carrying the sugar home himself !

Jabez returned, however, from the door, and putting the parcel back on the counter, said to him, “ No, Mr. Doolittle, this will not do ; it is very bad indeed.”

“ O sir ! indeed, sir, I have it from one of the very best Liverpool houses,” replied Tommy aghast.

“ Pish ! I do not mean the sugar, but your manner of conducting yourself. On my entrance you ought to have received me with a respectful bow—thus—saying, ‘ What can I have the honour of getting you this morning, sir ? ’ When I told you, you need not have said I could have as much sugar as I liked ; for, being a man of position, I was of course aware of that : but you should have proceeded to serve me, quickly but quietly (I observed that your

movements were somewhat too hurried for the dignity of perfect good manners) ; and whilst thus engaged you might have ventured to make any observation you thought would be agreeable, either on the weather or events in Reinsber. When you had folded up the parcel, you should have said, ‘ May I have the pleasure of sending it for you, sir ? ’ ” (Tommy blushed crimson.) “ I should probably have declined courteously, and taken my leave ; on which you ought certainly to have come round and opened the door for me, with another bow, as I went out. Come now, let us do all this properly.” And the little man was put through the whole performance again.

“ Well, this will illustrate the way in which you should treat your superiors. But suppose I am one of your neighbours—an old woman, we will imagine, who comes in for half an ounce of snuff. In this case a

civil ‘ Good morning ’ would probably be sufficient for your first address to me. But now—‘ Will you let me have half an ounce of high-dried, Mr. Doolittle ? ’ ”

“ What price, please, sir ? ”

“ Remember that I am an old woman, Mr. Doolittle,” said Jabez ; “ you should scarcely call me ‘ sir,’ should you ? ”

“ No, sir—yes, ma’am ; shall I weigh it for you, sir—that is, ma’am ? ” asked Tommy, getting fairly bothered in the difficulty of distinguishing between the two characters.

“ Weigh it ? Of course ; what else did I come in for ? You should now entertain me with a little pleasant chat——”

“ Well, sir,” Tommy eagerly edged in, “ have you heard of our last meeting ? There was James Stott, the reformed publican, the best orator——”

“ Yes ; only you should not try to do all the talking yourself, but should make frequent pauses, that your customer may take

her share in it if she wishes ; for conversation is like a game at ball, very poor amusement indeed unless each of the players gets a stroke now and then. When she retires, as she is only your equal, you need scarcely take the trouble, I should say, to open the door ; but it would not be amiss to give her a courteous salute from your own side of the counter."

"What, kiss her, sir?" exclaimed Tommy, with a nervous glance at the house-door.

"No, no," said Jabez, smiling ; "by saluting, I mean giving her a bow as she goes out."

After thus fully instructing Tommy in the perfect duty of grocers to their customers, Mr. Oliphant practised him in the art of lifting his hat gracefully. As described by Mrs. Doolittle, this last scene must have been something like the commander-in-chief putting a timid and awk-

ward recruit through his facings ; for Jabez made him stand out and go through all the different movements, correcting him over and over again, till he understood the thing completely. When Mr. Oliphant finally took his leave, he enjoined Tommy to practise the bowing when he was in the shop by himself. The little grocer, however, was so tired that he positively let him go after all without opening the shop-door for him : but he pretended afterwards to justify this incivility by saying that he did not know whether Jabez was going out *in propria personâ* or in the character of an old woman ; and the courtesy, on Mr. Oliphant's own showing, would not have been equally proper in both cases.

One of the points on which Jabez was strongest was domestic economy, and he insisted especially on the saving which might be effected by the very poorest, if they would simply buy goods wholesale

(say a hundredweight of sugar at a time, instead of by miserable half-pounds, on which an extravagant retail price was charged), and would only learn how to use what they bought so as to make the most of it. On one occasion, calling on Peggy Tennant, the rheumatic old woman mentioned above, he had the kindness, as it was her tea-time, to show her the best way of preparing the beverage. Goody Hawkswell, who had never forgiven him his intrusion on her middenstead, and was bitter besides at the numerous visits of the Hall footmen to Doolittle's shop, came in soon afterwards, and when she understood what Jabez was about to do, threw herself sullenly in the armchair by the fire with some muttering about "a meddling old fool," which I need scarcely say she took care to make inaudible.

"I now proceed, Mrs. Tennant, if you notice, to put in the pot only half a spoon-

ful of tea, which quantity you will find sufficient, in my way, to make an excellent infusion. I then pour in from the kettle a very little water thoroughly boiling, and now place the tea-pot on the hob, where it must stand exactly ten minutes."

Accordingly he pulled out his watch and, keeping it in his hand, chatted affably during the interval, while Peggy was loud in her praise of his kindness. "To think of a girt gentleman like him takking sa mich trouble about a poor old bedridden woman 'at was laid up wi' rheumatis and could get nae good for it, except mebbe a sup o' watter fra t' church-font now an' then! Aa dear, well—she had heard tell o' sich things i' story books, but she had lived seventy and three year come Michaelmas, an' she niver thowt they wor facts till now."

"I will get you some tea and let you have it at the wholesale price, Mrs. Tenant," said Jabez, encouraged by her evi-

dent gratitude. "I ought to know something about tea, so I shall calculate the price you give, buying it as at present, a couple of ounces at a time, and I will keep the difference for you. I believe you will find the saving amount to something considerable at the year-end."

Mrs. Hawkswell, notwithstanding a conciliatory remark or two which Jabez threw in her direction, sat fuming in her chair, morose and silent; nor did she rouse herself till Jabez, grandly unconscious of her feelings, declared that the ten minutes were up, and turned to her:

"Now I will trouble you, Mrs. Hawkswell, to pour the water in from the kettle, if you will be so kind, while I hold the teapot, and then Mrs. Tennant shall judge whether our experiment is a success or a failure. Be sure, please, that the water is boiling, now."

"Ay, ay, I'll tak' care o' that," cried

Goody Hawkswell, starting up and seizing hold of the kettle ; “it’s as hot as t’ owd lad hissel,” she continued, and instantly slapped half the boiling water in the kettle, not into the open tea-pot, which Jabez was holding out with a dignified smile of benevolence, but—immortal heavens!—right over that gentleman’s sacred legs and ankles.

* * * * *

Stately as he usually was, Jabez could not resist a sort of grim howl as the scalding water fell upon him. He dropped the earthen tea-pot—shivering it in a hundred pieces on the floor—and clapped his hands first to one leg and then to the other as he lifted each in turn. The pain was horrible, for he always wore low shoes, and his black silk stockings were of the thinnest ; but worse than the pain was the sense of injured dignity. There is a kind of fizzing spluttering anger which reminds one of red-hot iron plunged into cold water ; but Mr.

Oliphant's was anger at white heat, and would have required a good deal of water (and that not boiling) to cool it. Goody Hawkswell remained standing with the kettle in her hand, her face very red,—let us hope with shame at what she had done. As for Peggy, she cowered trembling in her bed, not daring to speak, but watching the pair and thinking it was all over now with the good things from the Hall.

Jabez sat down, still rubbing his calves.

“Mrs. Hawkswell,” he said, in a voice trembling with rage, “did you do that on purpose?”

“And why on purpose, think ye, Mr. Oliphant?” she answered, with a coarse laugh of defiance. “Ye shouldn’t be so meddlesome, and then. Kettles will slip.”

“If I thought you had dared, I—I would ——” Jabez did not finish the sentence, for he really did not know just at the present juncture what he could do. Had it

been a nobleman or a prince of the realm, he would have managed the thing; but how could he contend with this vulgar and abominable woman?

“Ye would what?” asked Goody Hawkswell, depositing the empty kettle on the hob, and putting her hands on her sides, her usual mode of preparation for a combat.

“I would——But pish! you are beneath notice.”

“Ay, ay, that she is!” whispered Peggy, plaintively, from the bed. “Dear me, I thowt it wasn’t for nothing ’at I dreamed o’ weshing my hands last neight: it’s a sure sign of trouble, that is.—O Mary, how could ye manish to do it?—Now do let her rub some oil on yer legs, Mr. Oliphant; do, now. It’s i’ t’ cupboard, Mary, and there’s a leaf o’ witch-hazel i’ it an’ aw. It’ll ease ye, I’se sure.”

“Certainly not, certainly not, Mrs. Tenant. We will try our experiment again,”

he added, with heroic courtesy, which did not fail him even in this disaster, "when that—that woman is not here. I am not offended with *you* at all. Good afternoon." And Jabez limped off, leaving Goody Hawkswell mistress of the field; for I must confess that my hero on this one occasion got something the worst of it.

END OF VOL. I.

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